



The Belfast Project: An Overview

Peace, Justice, and Oral History

Democratic
Progress
Institute

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Contents

Foreword.....	6
Introduction.....	8
Overview of the Conflict in Northern Ireland	9
The McConville Case	12
The Belfast Project.....	15
Peace vs Justice	19
Criticism of the Study	21
Conclusion.....	25
Appendix: DPI Board Members and Council of Experts	16

Foreword

The Democratic Progress Institute aims to create an inclusive environment in which different parties are able to participate in frank, structured discussions on peace and democracy in Turkey and the wider region. Our work provides opportunities for state and civil society actors to share their ideas and concerns, meet with experts from Turkey and abroad, and learn from comparative experiences of conflict and conflict resolution. In these forums, DPI strives to reinforce collaboration between academics, civil society, and policy-makers in an effort to identify common priorities and devise new ways to promote peace and democracy.

To enrich these discussions, DPI conducts research on a wide range of strategic and relevant topics, including constitutional reform, governance models in conflict societies, cultural and language rights, political participation and representation, the role of women in conflict resolution, and transitional justice. Our innovative model combines research and practical approaches in order to broaden bases for wider public involvement in the promotion of peace and democracy.

This paper will provide an overview of the Belfast Project, an oral history project conducted by researchers at Boston College with former combatants from the Northern Ireland Conflict. It will discuss the implications that this project has had for peace and justice in Northern Ireland and for similar oral history research elsewhere.

With special thanks to David Comley for his contribution to the research of this report.



Kerim Yildiz

Director

Democratic Progress Institute

Introduction

This report will discuss the arrest in April 2014 of Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams in connection with the murder of Jean McConville which occurred in 1972 at the height of the Northern Ireland ‘troubles’. The arrest has raised questions about the Northern Irish peace process and how issues of justice and peace can be reconciled.

The reconciliation of peace and justice after conflict is extremely difficult. Crimes committed during the conflict may be investigated during peacetime. However there is a risk that prosecutions will appear politicised if one group seems to be targeted above another. Additionally, those who committed, or are suspected of committing, crimes may be required to politically represent a particular group, and their arrest can disrupt delicate negotiations. The Belfast Project, and the McConville case which it draws attention to, gives a useful insight into these problems.

This paper will first give a brief overview of the conflict in Northern Ireland and an explanation of the McConville Case. It will then explain the history and structure of the Belfast Project and the problems caused when attempting to reconcile justice and peace after conflict. Finally, some key criticisms of the Belfast project will be explored with regard to the methodology used in the study and the legal advice given to participants.

Overview of the conflict in Northern Ireland

The conflict in Northern Ireland can be traced back to English and Scottish settlers who migrated to Northern Ireland in the 1600s. These predominantly Protestant settlers dominated social and political life in the Ulster region of Ireland and discriminated against the indigenous Catholic population, extending their influence throughout the island. In 1801 the Irish Parliament was abolished and Ireland was formally incorporated into the United Kingdom.

In 1919 Irish republicans instigated the Irish war of independence. In 1920 the British Government passed the Government of Ireland Act which partitioned Ireland into the Protestant-dominated north and Catholic-dominated south. In 1921 the south of Ireland became an independent republic whilst the northern section remained under UK sovereignty.

Between 1920 and 1972 the devolved government in Northern Ireland exercised considerable autonomy. The Protestant community generally favoured continued union with the United Kingdom, lending them the name 'Unionists' or 'Loyalists'. The Catholic community generally favoured the idea of a united Irish Republic, causing them to be called 'Nationalists' or 'Republicans'. The political sphere was dominated by Protestants, which led to widespread civil rights violations against the Catholic minority. The inability of the state to address these social inequalities harboured resentment between the two communities and in 1966 inter-communal fighting broke out in the North. This period from the late 1960's, to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, came to be known as 'The Troubles'.

Following the British Army's deployment in Northern Ireland, an attempt to restore order, an array of paramilitary organisations emerged on both sides of the sectarian divide. The largest Republican paramilitary group was the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) which had split from the historic Irish Republican Army in 1969. Large Unionist paramilitaries such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) also formed during this period.

The British army were initially welcomed by Northern Irish Catholics as they were seen as a neutral force to protect them from Unionist paramilitaries and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the Protestant-dominated police force. However on 30 January 1972 26 civil rights protestors and bystanders were shot by British soldiers in an incident which came to be known as 'Bloody Sunday'. This incident boosted support for the IRA's Republican cause and caused the British Army to be perceived by Republicans as the enemy.

Sectarian conflict continued to divide communities for the following two decades. However, from 1972 onwards, secret backchannel negotiations began to open between the British government and Republican groups, which were often facilitated by civil society actors. One such individual was Father Alex Reid who facilitated negotiations between the British Government and Sinn Féin, a Republican political group with close ties to the IRA, from 1986 onwards. These negotiations gave both sides a more nuanced idea of their opposition's aims and objectives, and demonstrated to Republican paramilitary groups that the British may be willing to negotiate an end to the conflict. During the 1970s and 1980s however, the British government publically stated that they would not negotiate with the IRA. These backchannel discussions therefore laid the basis for open negotiations in the 1990's where both sides could anticipate a chance of success.

In 1993 the British Prime Minister, John Major, and the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the Republic of Ireland, Albert Reynolds, issued the 'Downing Street Declaration' which committed both states to respect the right of Northern Irish citizens to self-determination. This also affirmed the right of the Northern Irish population to transfer sovereignty of the North from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Ireland if the majority of the population wished to do so. The declaration was followed by a ceasefire by the IRA and several prominent Loyalist paramilitaries.

Talks continued throughout the 1990's between the British government and Republican groups, culminating in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This agreement, signed by the British and Irish governments and the majority of Unionist and Republican groups, addressed issues relating to democratic institutions in Northern Ireland, the establishment of the North/South Ministerial Council and the establishment of the British Irish Council. It also covered sections on rights, equality of opportunity, decommissioning of arms, security, policing, justice and prisoners. The agreement signalled the end of 'the Troubles', although issues over justice, reconciliation and the display of symbols remained.

Subsequent negotiations between the conflicting parties in 2006 led to the St Andrew's agreement. This restored the Northern Irish Assembly, created a power-sharing executive between Unionist and Republican groups in the North and secured the support of Sinn Féin, the largest Republican political party, for the North's reformed police force and judicial institutions.

The McConville Case

The case of Jean McConville illustrates the delicate balance between justice and peace that must be maintained to enable sustainable peace in Northern Ireland. Mrs Jean McConville was a widow living in the Divas Flats estate in West Belfast. In late December 1972 she was abducted by armed men from her home and never returned. In 1998 the PIRA admitted to murdering McConville. In 2003 McConville's body was discovered on Shellinghill Beach in the Republic of Ireland.

Jean McConville had been born to Protestant parents but converted to Catholicism when she married her husband Arthur McConville, a Catholic who had once been a member of the British Army. Arthur McConville died in January 1972 of cancer leaving Jean McConville to care for her ten children. It is suspected that McConville was regarded by Republican paramilitaries with suspicion because of her unconventional religious background.

On the 29th November McConville was attacked on her way home by a group of unknown men who warned her not to give information to the British Army. She was discovered by police on her way back home and the incident was recorded.

The following day¹ McConville was abducted from her home. Although there has been no official account of the abduction, an account exists from her children who were present. Archie McConville gave the following evidence at the coroner's inquest.

*"At the time I was 16 years of age. My sister Helen had gone to the chip shop to get chips for us. In the house that evening was my sisters Agnes and Suzanne and my brothers Michael, Billy, Thomas and Jim. I was the eldest child there. At around 6.30 that evening we heard a banging on the door of the flat. I answered the door and four masked men and four masked women came in. They came into the house and told my mother to put on her coat. We were all in a panic and the children were squealing everywhere. We were afraid of what they were going to do to our mother. They said that she was only being taken for questioning for a few hours. My mother was very upset and I asked if I could go too. They allowed me to go with her. The rest of the children were left in the house on their own. Helen was not back from the chip shop at that stage. When we got to the bottom of the stairs they put guns to my head and told me to F off back up the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs there were about 18 to 20 people, all masked and had guns."*²

The motivation behind the abduction and murder is still unclear. When the IRA acknowledged that they had murdered McConville in 1999 they stated that they had done so because they believed she was an informant.

1 As a result of incomplete police records there is no consensus over what date McConville was abducted on. The children claim that their mother was abducted the day after being attack on her way home, implying the 30th November, but in a subsequent interview Archie McConville claimed it had occurred on December 7th.

2 <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/police/ombudsman/po130806.pdf>

Others have speculated that the abduction was in revenge for Mrs McConville helping a wounded British Army officer who had been shot on the floor above her, though this claim is unsubstantiated.

Despite an article published in the Belfast Telegraph on 13 January 1972 which claimed that the police were investigating the disappearance, no investigation took place at the time³. This is because the level of violence around the Divas Flats area had meant that the police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) did not have the resources to investigate all crimes.

A formal investigation into the McConville case began only in 1995 when the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)⁴ launched an investigation into persons who had disappeared during the Troubles.⁵

3 <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/police/ombudsman/po130806.pdf>

4 The RUC was the police service of Northern Ireland from 1922 until 2001 when it was replaced by the new Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) under agreements resulting from the Good Friday Agreement.

5 <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/police/ombudsman/po130806.pdf>

The Belfast Project overview

The Belfast Project was an oral history project conducted by researchers from Boston College, a US university with strong connections to Ireland. It was designed to record the experiences of people who had first-hand experience of the troubles from both sides of the sectarian divide. It was designed to include interviews both from Republican IRA and Unionist Ulster Volunteer Force veterans⁶.

The project was initiated by Ed Moloney, a well-known Irish journalist and Robert K. O'Neill, the Head of the Burns Library at Boston College. The lead researcher on the project was Anthony McIntyre who had previously spent 18 years in prison for involvement in Republican paramilitary activities. McIntyre interviewed former Republican volunteers whilst colleague Wilson McArthur interviewed those from the Loyalist side⁷.

Over the course of the project the researchers persuaded over 100 individuals to be confidentially interviewed about their experiences during the conflict. The researchers agreed that the transcripts would not be released until after the interviewee's death. This was designed to encourage people to come forward and contribute to the historical record without fear of prosecution. This arrangement was modelled on a similar programme that had been run by the Irish Bureau of Military History in the 1950's which recorded the experiences of veterans of the Irish war of Independence and Civil War.

⁶ <http://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/supporting-documents/boston-college-publications/>

⁷ <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/wipe-terror-tapes-and-close-boston-college-archive-its-authors-urge-28698864.html>

In this project the transcripts were held confidentially by the government of the Republic of Ireland until 2003 when they were finally released. During the Belfast Project only Moloney, McIntyre and McArthur were to know exactly who had participated and what had been said. The tapes were to be held by the Burns Library in Boston and as such became known as the ‘Boston Tapes’.

In 2008 Brendan Hughes, a former IRA volunteer who had participated in the Belfast Project, died⁸. Following his death excerpts of the interview he had given to the researchers were released in 2010 by Moloney in a book entitled ‘Voices from the Grave’. This book told the stories of both Hughes and of David Ervine, a former loyalist paramilitary volunteer who had also been interviewed for the project⁹.

The book’s publication received mixed reception. Aside from those who felt that it made an important contribution to the historical record, some felt that Hughes’ confession could be used as evidence in the case of the murder of Jean McConville¹⁰. On the other side of the sectarian divide, some Republicans regarded Hughes’ interview as an attempt to smear Adams following their disagreements¹¹.

Hughes had fallen-out with Adams over Adams’ willingness to abandon the armed struggle in favour of peace talks. Many of those siding with Adams felt that this spat had biased Hughes’ testimony and could have led him to exaggerate accusations against his former colleague.

8 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bf70d5f4-d45a-11e3-a122-00144feabdc0.html#axzz33gcR9cq1>

9 <http://chronicle.com/article/Secrets-from-Belfast/144059/>

10 <http://www.herald.ie/news/we-owe-it-to-mcconville-to-reveal-ira-interviews-and-tackle-adams-29226032.html>

11 <http://www.dannymorrison.com/?p=2029>

Shortly after the publication of *Voices from the Grave* another Belfast Project interviewee, Dolours Price, was interviewed by Allison Morris of the Belfast-based 'Irish News' about her role in IRA activities. During this interview she expressed a willingness to confess about her involvement in the disappearance of people during the Troubles, and admitted to having been part of an oral history project run by a Boston-based university. Two days later, Ciaran Barnes, a colleague of Morris' at the *Sunday Life*, a Belfast tabloid, published an article in which he claimed to have heard the taped interview. Barnes alleged that in this interview Price had claimed that Adams had been her commanding officer at the time when McConville was murdered. These revelations prompted a similar reaction to that of Hughes' testimony, as Price had also been known to have fallen-out with Adams over concessions made during the peace process.

The release of these two testimonies came to the attention of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) which was investigating the murder of Jean McConville. In May 2011 the US Justice Department, working on behalf of the PSNI in accordance with a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) issued a sealed subpoena to Boston College requesting that they surrender the taped interviews of Hughes and Price.

To some, the subpoena was politically motivated. Gerry Adams had been elected to the Irish Parliament two months earlier and evidence from the tapes could be used to support a criminal case against him. For others, the PSNI were simply doing their job and following up a case when new evidence arose. Several weeks after the subpoena was issued the college surrendered Hughes's tapes. In an interview with *Boston Globe*, Moloney suggested that the College may have to destroy the archive to prevent other tapes from being accessed by the authorities.

This exacerbated tensions between the researchers and the College. Many academics at the College had been unaware that the project had taken place including many in the History department who would ordinarily have been consulted on this kind of oral history project¹². The College's administration were deeply embarrassed by the incident and tried to distance itself from the researchers. Rather than backing their right to academic freedom, Moloney and his team began to feel that the College had abandoned them and everyone who had participated in this sensitive project¹³.

The College's legal team regarded Moloney's suggestion of destroying the tapes as the cause of a second subpoena three months later, which requested access to all interviews conducted with former paramilitaries. The College attempted to have this second subpoena quashed at the Federal District Court in Boston. As part of this process, the researchers agreed to hand over the complete archive to Judge William Young so that he could review which materials, if any, should be surrendered to the Northern Irish authorities¹⁴.

After the review Judge Young decided that only one of the interviews was directly relevant to the McConville case. However, because a further ten interviews contained references to the McConville case he decided that a total of eleven interviews should be surrendered.

12 <http://sluggerotoole.com/2014/06/18/boston-college-risk-could-have-been-managed-without-abandoning-ethical-and-legal-considerations/>

13 <http://chronicle.com/article/Secrets-from-Belfast/144059/>

14 <http://thebrokenelbow.com/2014/05/06/gerry-adams-and-the-belfast-project-a-statement-in-response/>

On 30 April 2014 the PSNI arrested Gerry Adams on the basis of evidence gained from these surrendered tapes¹⁵ He was questioned about his connection to McConville's murder and was released after four days without charge.¹⁶ Despite no charge being made against Adams, the arrest provoked fierce condemnation from Republican groups in Northern Ireland. Mary Lou McDonald, Sinn Féin's deputy leader, declared that the arrest had been politically motivated and was an attempt to discredit the Republican cause before the May 2014 European elections, in which Sinn Féin was participating¹⁷. This was strongly contested by the Unionist camp and by the PSNI, which declared that the arrest had been in line with standard police procedures over arresting those suspected of involvement with serious crime. There were fears that anger about the arrest, and the dredging-up of accusations that Adams had been involved with IRA activities during the troubles, could put pressure on the fragile peace that had been brokered in Northern Ireland since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Peace and Justice

This case highlights a common and extremely difficult problem facing societies recovering from conflict; that of how to punish those responsible for crimes committed during the conflict whilst simultaneously achieving sustainable peace. From the perspective of the state, those who committed crimes during the conflict ought to be punished according to the law.

15 <http://www.thejournal.ie/gerry-adams-sinn-fein-arrest-1445393-May2014/>

16 <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/may/04/gerry-adams-to-be-freed-without-charge>

17 <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304677904579534130591684764>

However, peace is a precarious concept which is carefully achieved through uncomfortable compromises between adversaries. Great distrust remains in Loyalist communities towards Republicans holding positions of power in the new Northern Irish national institutions, yet the involvement of these Republican leaders is essential if Northern Ireland is to be governed with the consent of an equally distrustful Republican electorate. Therefore the mere arrest of Republican politicians, who claim not to have committed criminal acts, can imply a politicisation of the new police force which was designed to equally represent the interests of both communities. If those from Republican communities lost faith in the PSNI then support for other Good Friday institutions could falter, potentially heralding a new era of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland.¹⁸

There is also a need for opposing parties to come to a power-sharing arrangement such as that agreed upon at St Andrews in 2006. These agreements will entail involving actors from both sides in the political process in order to create a general acceptance of the next political order. However if leaders on either side are arrested this delicate balance of legitimacy can be disrupted, setting the peace process back significantly. In some cases amnesties are granted to those who had committed crimes in the conflict. This is a very contentious policy, as it gives impunity to those who have wronged others and deprives victims of a right to legal justice¹⁹. For this reason amnesties have been opposed in Northern Ireland.

18 <http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/0709/461350-boston-tapes/>

19 <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/04/07/uk-britain-ireland-amnesty-idUKBREA3611N20140407>

Criticisms levelled against the study

Legal advice to participants

In the McConville case, the evidence which ultimately led to the arrest of Gerry Adams was never meant to reach a courtroom. Had the Belfast project not taken place, there would have been no grounds on which to arrest Adams on alleged involvement with the IRA. The PSNI have a duty to follow up evidence in criminal cases and when the accusations against Adams came to light in the Irish press they had a responsibility to follow them up.

When the project was first approved by Robert K. O'Neill, Head of the Burns Library at Boston College, the researchers claim that they were given the impression that the testimonies given by participants would not be released by anyone. However, subsequent analysis has shown that the contracts signed by participants made no explicit claim to keep their testimonies confidential. Ted Palys and John Lowman of Simon Fraser University's School of Criminology argue that an outside review by the University's legal team would have likely highlighted key issues including those of releasing tapes before everyone had died and other legal ramifications.²⁰ However, this was not conducted during the Belfast project.

20 <http://chronicle.com/article/Secrets-from-Belfast/144059/>

Clifford M. Kuhn of the Oral History Association²¹ has suggested that Moloney should not have released any of the tapes until after all participants in the study had died to prevent the testimonies of the dead from forming part of a case against the living. If the programme had been run along the lines of the one conducted by the Irish Bureau of Military History in the 1950's, in which the tapes were released many decades after the study, the Belfast project could have avoided the problems which emerged from the publicity generated from Moloney's *Voices from the Grave* book. However, this wouldn't have prevented Dolours Price from speaking to the press about her involvement in the project and therefore alerting the PSNI to the possibility that useful evidence could be gained from the tapes.

21 <http://chronicle.com/article/Secrets-from-Belfast/144059/>

Methodology

The project set out to record the felt-experience of sectarian conflict by recording the experiences of those involved in it. However the interviewers ultimately only sampled those from a particular camp of Republicanism; those who had become disaffected with the peace process and had fallen out with the official leadership. This bias would probably not have occurred had the project conformed to more stringent oral history standards which take this bias into account. A lawyer involved in the case is quoted as having said:

“It’s very clear it was an intellectual, academic project, but was riddled with inaccuracies, unreliable and subjective”²²

This sentiment was backed up by Judge Young, one of the few people to have reviewed the tapes, who stated:

“This was a bona fide academic exercise of considerable intellectual merit... It’s clear to the Court ... [that] these materials are of interest. They are of interest – valid academic interests. They’re of interest to the historian, sociologist, the student of religion, the student of youth movements, academics who are interested in insurgency and counterinsurgency, in terrorism and counterterrorism. They’re of interest to those who study the history of religions. And I’m sure others”²³.

22 <http://sluggerotoole.com/2014/06/18/boston-college-risk-could-have-been-managed-without-abandoning-ethical-and-legal-considerations/>

23 <http://sluggerotoole.com/2014/06/18/boston-college-risk-could-have-been-managed-without-abandoning-ethical-and-legal-considerations/>

Despite the good intentions that the researchers may have had when they commenced the project, the failure to adhere to conventional oral history methodology limited the academic utility of the project. Combined with the researchers' inability to guarantee the confidentiality of the interviews, these methodological shortcomings resulted in a contentious project in a society which still feels the pain of the conflict.

Conclusion

The Belfast project was designed to record the personal stories of those who had been involved in the Northern Ireland conflict and gain perspectives which had previously been impossible to record. The historical record of a very difficult period in Northern Irish history clearly would have been enriched had the project proceeded as planned. However, the sensitive nature of the confessions, coupled with the publication of findings of the study when the wounds of conflict were still fresh led to the project raising legal as well as academic concerns. The project would have avoided many of the problems had the tapes been released a long time after the death of participants. The participants were incorrectly briefed that their testimonies would remain confidential, as it would have been very difficult for the researchers to prevent the police from gaining access to the tapes if they had reason to do so. Finally, the project was not conducted in line with rigorous oral history standards, meaning that the data may have contained unexpected bias. Although these factors can be avoided by similar projects in future, the negative publicity surrounding the Belfast Project is likely to make it very difficult to attract a wide variety of participants with memories of conflict in future.

DPI Board and Council of Experts

Director:

Kerim Yildiz

Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in international human rights law and minority rights, and is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

DPI Board Members:

Nicholas Stewart QC (Chair)

Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom . Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.

Professor Penny Green (Secretary)

Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).

Priscilla Hayner

Co-founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organisations.

Arild Humlen

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.

Jacki Muirhead

Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

Professor David Petrasek

Professor of International Political Affairs at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Expert and author on human rights, humanitarian law and conflict resolution issues, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, consultant to United Nations.

Antonia Potter Prentice

Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, Mediator, and Terre des Hommes.

DPI Council of Experts

Dermot Ahern

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.

Dr Mehmet Asutay

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. He researches, teaches and supervises research on Middle Eastern economic development, the political economy of Middle East including Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format. He has been involved in human rights issues in various levels for many years, and has a close interest in transitional justice, conflict resolution and development issues at academic and policy levels.

Christine Bell

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

Cengiz Çandar

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

Yilmaz Ensaroğlu

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

Professor Mervyn Frost

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

Martin Griffiths

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN

Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

Dr. Edel Hughes

Senior Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

Avila Kilmurray

A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

Professor Ram Manikkalingam

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

Bejan Matur

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. Columnist, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

Professor Monica McWilliams

Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.

Jonathan Powell

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

Sir Kieran Prendergast

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

Rajesh Rai

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

Professor Naomi Roht Arriaza

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

Professor Dr. Mithat Sancar

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