

After terrorists go to European court... Human rights law helps murderers not victims, say Omagh families

- **Two Real IRA terrorists won latest fight to escape paying damages**
- **Michael McKeivitt and Liam Campbell were ordered to pay share of £1.6m**
- **But lawyers persuaded court to put their case to have order overturned**
- **Families of those murdered say they were outraged by decision**

By [Chris Greenwood](#)

Published: 21:30 GMT, 20 April 2014 | Updated: 08:55 GMT, 21 April 2014

Families of the Omagh bombing victims said yesterday that human rights laws favour 'killer gangs'.

They spoke out after two Real IRA terrorists won the latest round of their European court fight to escape paying damages.

Michael McKeivitt and Liam Campbell were ordered to pay a share of £1.6million in aggravated damages after a landmark civil action found them liable for the 1998 atrocity.



A Royal Ulster Constabulary officer looking at the damage caused by a bomb explosion in Market Street, Omagh

But their lawyers have persuaded officials at the European Court of Human Rights to put their case to have the order overturned before judges.

It was revealed yesterday that the Government must now formally respond to their case after they passed an important filtering stage designed to weed out invalid cases.

Families of those murdered when the car bomb exploded in the Northern Irish market town said they were outraged by the decision.

Michael Gallagher, whose 21-year-old son Aiden was killed in the blast, said the development was a 'psychological blow' and called for the law to be urgently reformed.

'There seems to be no effective law for giving rights to victims,' he said. 'The human rights laws to me would need to be looked at again.'

'It has always favoured the killer gangs and organisations and never the victims. It's always weighted on the side of the perpetrator and this news is extremely disappointing.'

**Today I am asking you,
our wonderful readers,
to help a group of quietly
magnificent people
shamefully betrayed
by British justice**

From the Mail, February 7, 2002

**HOW YOU CAN WIN
JUSTICE FOR THE
BOMB CHILDREN**

October 28, 2000

**HALLELUJAH
FOR JUSTICE**



June 9, 2009

How the Mail led the fight

THE campaign by the families of the Omagh bomb victims for justice has been spearheaded by the Daily Mail.

When no one was successfully prosecuted in the criminal courts, relatives approached this newspaper for help.

In 2000, we announced their intention to serve writs for damages on the gang they held

responsible. Donations poured in from readers and more than £1.2million was raised towards the cost of the action.

In 2002, McKeivitt was given legal aid but the families were told they did not qualify. In 2003, however, the Government – spurred on by Mail readers' generosity – agreed to find the extra £800,000 they needed.

is terrorism, is the new Nazism, and there has been no effective human rights legislation focused on the victims.'

The decision of terrorists to turn to controversial human rights legislation again highlights Europe's influence over the British legal system.

They are following in the footsteps of many foreign criminals who have attempted to use the law to escape deportation.

The Omagh bombing, in which 29 people and unborn twins died and hundreds more were injured, was the worst single terrorist attack of the Troubles. The Real IRA admitted responsibility, but no one was ever successfully prosecuted in the criminal courts.



Republicans Colm Murphy and Seamus Daly, were ordered to pay damages but embarked on a lengthy appeal process.

In January last year, it emerged that McKeivitt, 64, and Campbell, 52, had taken their case to the Strasbourg court in a final attempt to escape paying up.

McKeivitt is serving a 20-year jail sentence imposed in 2003 by a court in Dublin for IRA membership and directing terrorism.

Campbell, a fellow dissident Republican, was jailed for eight years by the same court in 2004 for IRA membership.

Their lawyers claim their rights were breached under Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights – the right to a fair trial – which has been incorporated into British law by the Human Rights Act. The argument focuses on the decision to allow hearsay evidence from FBI agent David Rupert, who infiltrated dissident Republican terrorist groups.

Earlier this month Daly, 43, appeared at Dungannon Magistrates' Court charged with 29 counts of murder over Omagh.

Stanley McComb, whose wife Ann died in the blast, said of McKeivitt and Campbell's move: 'Those b***** will go to any length and any extreme. It's all just a cynical exercise for them.

'These guys are just terrorists, murderers and yet they can get all the support they need to get this into a European court. What is wrong with the judicial system that is allowing this to happen? This is all a moneymaking exercise for the legal profession too.'