# Patrick O’Neill’s case referred to Court of Appeal over alleged torture during interrogation



The case of Patrick O’Neill, a man sentenced to 15 years in prison in 1972 for possession of ammunition and explosives with intent, has been referred to the Court of Appeal in Belfast following a review by the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). The review raised concerns that Mr O’Neill may have been subjected to “torture or inhuman and degrading treatment” during his interrogation.

Mr O’Neill was convicted after being found in possession of ammunition and explosives. The events leading to his arrest began in 1971 when he was approached by two members of the Scots Guards while sitting in a car outside an address in Belfast. According to the original case, Mr O’Neill said he was waiting on someone inside the property, but the occupant denied knowing him.

A search of Mr O’Neill’s car uncovered 700 rounds of ammunition hidden in a concealed compartment on the driver’s side. The following day, his family farm was also searched, and further arms were reportedly discovered. Details about Mr O’Neill’s place of origin have been withheld by the CCRC.

Following his arrest, Mr O’Neill was taken to Palace Barracks in Holywood, County Down, where he was interrogated on six separate occasions without the presence of a solicitor. Despite being subjected to multiple questioning sessions, several injuries noted during a later medical examination were not documented in official records. A police detective later reported having spoken to Mr O’Neill, who purportedly admitted responsibility for the ammunition but refused to provide a written statement.

Mr O’Neill’s legal team submitted his case for review to the CCRC in 2019. The commission’s statement declared that his three convictions had been referred back to the courts due to evidence indicating the use of coercive methods to obtain a confession. The CCRC cited concerns regarding executive misconduct, the inadmissibility of confession evidence obtained under questionable circumstances, and insufficient evidence apart from the confession itself.

The commission stated, “The CCRC now considers there is a real possibility the convictions will not be upheld and has referred them to the Court of Appeal.”

Since its establishment in 1997, the CCRC has reviewed approximately 1,500 applications annually and has referred around 3% of these cases to appeal courts. Patrick O’Neill’s case represents one of the instances where the commission has found potential miscarriages of justice significant enough to warrant further judicial scrutiny.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://ccrc.gov.uk/news/convictions-referred-to-northern-ireland-court-of-appeal-due-to-inhuman-and-degrading-treatment-in-custody/> - Corroborates the referral of Patrick O'Neill's convictions by the CCRC due to evidence of inhuman/degrading treatment during interrogation, including details about the 1972 conviction and 2019 review.
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guildford_Four_and_Maguire_Seven> - Provides context on similar cases involving disputed confessions and appeals processes in Northern Ireland, supporting the historical pattern of convictions being challenged due to interrogation practices.
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liam_Holden> - Reinforces the historical context of UK security forces using coercive interrogation methods in 1970s Northern Ireland, with documented European Court findings on inhuman treatment.
4. <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/judicial-decisions> - Provides the official source for judicial decisions in Northern Ireland, including Court of Appeal rulings - relevant to the current referral process.
5. <https://ccrc.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/> - Details the CCRC's case referral criteria and annual workload statistics (1,500 applications reviewed, ~3% referred), supporting the article's claims about the commission's processes.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-cases-review-commission-annual-reports> - Contains CCRC annual reports that document referral rates and case types, substantiating the article's statistics about historical referral percentages.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/troubles-conviction-referred-to-court-of-appeal-after-evidence-suggested-torture-or-inhuman-treatment-YSNKJ3XLSRH6DKWNF3U6E4KMZI/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data