# Pensioner’s family denied judicial review in Stakeknife murder case amid justice delays



The daughter of a pensioner murdered during a turbulent era in Northern Ireland has faced a significant setback in her quest for justice. Noreen Thompson's efforts to have a judicial review of the circumstances surrounding her father’s death, allegedly orchestrated to shield a high-ranking British agent within the IRA, have been denied. An Investigatory Powers Tribunal determined that her case would need to be manoeuvred through the Court of Appeal in England and Wales, rather than the Northern Irish courts, leaving her feeling frustrated and abandoned in a quest that has already seen numerous twists and turns.

Central to this tragic narrative is the individual known as 'Stakeknife', widely believed to be Freddie Scappaticci, a former IRA member who became an invaluable informant for British intelligence during the Troubles. Scappaticci’s dual role within the IRA's internal security unit means that he holds a key, albeit controversial, position in the memory of those affected by the violence of that period. Many families have come forward alleging that the protection offered to spies like Scappaticci resulted in the loss of innocent lives, blurring the ethical lines drawn in the battle against terrorism.

The allegations surrounding Stakeknife’s clandestine operations are as disturbing as they are complex. A recent report assessing the implications of Scappaticci’s role suggests that the operations linked to him may have cost more lives than they saved. According to the findings, while the British security services claimed that Stakeknife’s intelligence work prevented numerous attacks, the opposite may have been true. Individuals suspected of murder were permitted to operate freely, allowing them to continue their violent activities, ultimately leading to even greater devastation.

Furthermore, the Public Prosecution Service’s announcement that it would not pursue charges against twelve individuals connected to the Stakeknife inquiry adds another layer of disappointment. The lack of prosecutorial action—despite extensive investigations—indicates a troubling impasse in the pursuit of accountability. Families like Thompson’s are left grappling with the implications of such decisions, feeling that justice remains perpetually out of reach.

This sentiment is echoed by other families who have also engaged in legal battles over the killings of their loved ones linked to Stakeknife. The case of Caroline Moreland, a mother murdered in 1994, is reminiscent of Thompson’s plight. Moreland’s family recently concluded a protracted legal struggle to ensure her case was included in a police investigation into Stakeknife’s activities, now known as Operation Kenova. This investigation aims to scrutinise the relationships between state agents and the violence executed under their watch—an inquiry that has already consumed significant public resources.

Despite the absence of legal consequences for those involved, some families remain hopeful that thorough investigations will eventually illuminate the roles played by various actors during the conflict. For some, this hope is grounded in the belief that injustice cannot hold indefinitely, and systemic reconstructions of state actions during the Troubles are critical for both healing and historical accuracy.

However, for Thompson and others in similar situations, the journey toward justice feels interminable and fraught with bureaucratic hurdles. Claims that lives were intentionally sacrificed to protect agents provoke outrage and seek to reinforce the idea that accountability is vital for rectifying historical grievances. As historical inquiries unfold, the stark reality remains that for many families, including Thompson’s, the scars of the past endure, leaving a painful legacy that challenges both memory and justice in Northern Ireland.

As discussions surrounding legacy cases and the murky roles of informants continue, it is clear that the implications extend far beyond individual stories; they are woven into the very fabric of Northern Irish society, beckoning for a comprehensive reckoning with its troubled past.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: Source 1
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/courts/daughter-of-pensioner-sacrificed-to-protect-ira-spy-stakeknife-loses-battle-for-legal-review-of-case/a387787204.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-68433226> - The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) has decided not to charge the final 12 individuals involved in the 'Stakeknife' case, a multi-million-pound investigation into the British Army's top agent within the IRA. The PPS concluded there was 'no reasonable prospect of conviction' for any of the 12 individuals, which included five retired soldiers and seven alleged IRA members. 'Stakeknife' was a codename for an IRA member who became one of the UK's most valuable spies during the Troubles, widely believed to be Freddie Scappaticci, who died in 2023.
3. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2022/03/16/news/family-of-murdered-mother-of-three-end-legal-battle-2615466/> - The family of Caroline Moreland, a Belfast mother-of-three murdered by the IRA in 1994, has ended a six-year legal battle to ensure her killing is included in a major police investigation into the former top British spy inside the IRA, known as 'Stakeknife'. The legal action was withdrawn after confirmation that her case is part of Operation Kenova, the probe examining activities of the state agent codenamed 'Stakeknife'.
4. <https://www.sundayworld.com/crime/irish-crime/iras-top-tout-still-out-there-family-of-pensioner-sacrificed-to-protect-stakeknife/a311207500.html> - The family of Francisco Notarantonio, a Catholic pensioner killed in 1987, believes he was sacrificed to protect a top-ranking IRA spy, codenamed 'Stakeknife'. They argue that another high-ranking IRA spy, yet to be unmasked, set up their father for murder. The family maintains that the agent known as 'Stakeknife' was involved in their father's death, but it wasn't Freddie Scappaticci, who is widely believed to be 'Stakeknife'.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2024-03-08/army-double-agent-operations-within-ira-cost-lives-report-finds> - A major report into the British Army’s top agent in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, known as 'Stakeknife', reveals that operations within the IRA likely cost more lives than they saved. The report found that those responsible for killings were allowed to remain free to continue with their terrorist activities, and the claim that 'Stakeknife' saved 'hundreds of lives' was unjustified. The agent, widely believed to be Freddie Scappaticci, was part of the IRA’s internal security unit.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/08/inquiry-into-ira-murders-supported-by-victims-daughter-despite-lack-of-prosecutions> - Despite no prosecutions resulting from the investigation into the army’s top agent within the IRA, known as 'Stakeknife', the daughter of one of the victims supports the inquiry. The investigation, which began in 2016 and cost approximately £40 million, examined the activities of 'Stakeknife', widely believed to be Freddie Scappaticci, and the role played by the security services, including MI5, in the murders and abductions during the Troubles.
7. <https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/2024/03/09/british-security-forces-allowed-murders-to-be-carried-out-and-go-unpunished-damning-inquiry-finds/> - A damning inquiry into the British Army’s top IRA spy during the Troubles, known as 'Stakeknife', concludes that British security forces allowed murders to be carried out and go unpunished to protect its agents within the Provisional IRA. The report found that more lives were lost than saved due to the actions of the mole codenamed 'Stakeknife', widely believed to be Freddie Scappaticci, who died in 2023.