# Sean Brown family condemns UK government appeal against public inquiry as contemptuous



The ongoing struggle for justice faced by the family of Sean Brown, a murdered GAA official, underscores the complicated dynamics of historical inquiries in Northern Ireland. Brown's daughter, Siobhan, recently articulated the family's frustration with the British government, labelling its actions as an example of "contempt" after they lodged an appeal against a ruling that mandated a public inquiry into her father's 1997 murder. The appeal follows a decision by the High Court in Belfast, which deemed the government’s failure to initiate an inquiry unlawful and contravened Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Sean Brown was abducted and brutally murdered by loyalist paramilitaries while closing up the Bellaghy Wolfe Tones GAA club over two decades ago. Since that tragic event, his family has fought relentlessly for transparency and accountability, enduring years of emotional turmoil and bureaucratic inertia. In April, following a ruling that called for a public inquiry, the family believed they were finally on the path to uncovering the truth. However, the government’s swift move to appeal has reignited their sense of betrayal. Siobhan expressed their outrage, stating, “It is our confirmed opinion that the secretary of state is thumbing his nose at our family… This is not acceptable, and our family will resist and fight this in court.”

The application to the UK Supreme Court has raised further questions about the government’s commitment to justice. Siobhan's remarks were echoed by Niall Murphy, the family’s solicitor, who noted a troubling lack of communication from the government since the initial High Court ruling. “Late on Friday night, the Brown family found out via a media report that a Permission to Appeal application has been lodged,” he lamented, highlighting the manner in which critical developments have been communicated to the family.

Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn, in response to the backlash, stated that the application for an appeal was prompted by the ruling's implications, which he argued raise "matters of constitutional significance." Despite expressing a desire for a thorough investigation into Mr. Brown’s death, Benn’s actions—coupled with the absence of prior notification to the Brown family—have provoked accusations of insensitivity from various quarters. First Minister Michelle O'Neill has described the government's move as "cruel and inhumane," reflecting broader sentiments within the community that the Brown family has already endured a lengthy wait for answers.

The legal tussle continues since the ruling, which the family welcomed as a significant victory after 27 years of campaigning. However, the government's appeal could potentially delay the inquiry by months, with the Supreme Court expected to make a decision on whether to accept the case within four months. If the appeal is granted, the hearing may occur only after an additional nine-month period, further extending the emotional burden on the Brown family.

As the case progresses, the community remains steadfast in its support, rallying around the Brown family amid their quest for truth. Siobhan Brown has indicated that they will be vocal in opposing the appeal, emphasising that this fight is not just for their family but for the wider demand for justice regarding past violence in Northern Ireland. The resolution of this case may not only provide closure for the Brown family but could also set a significant precedent concerning the investigation of historical injustices.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/sean-brown-daughter-says-uk-treating-family-with-contempt-as-supreme-court-appeal-lodged-66WDBLF3SNGZHLWCXQSXMU36XA/), [[2]](https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2025/04/03/uk-governments-failure-to-order-inquiry-into-sean-brown-murder-cannot-stand-appeal-court-rules/), [[4]](https://www.thejournal.ie/uk-government-failure-public-inquiry-murder-sean-brown-cannot-stand-6667192-Apr2025/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-05-01/no-surprise-just-disappointment-say-brown-family-over-benn-inquiry-appeal), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-04-03/failure-to-order-sean-brown-public-inquiry-unlawful-court-rules), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-04-30/government-plans-to-challenge-court-ruling-over-sean-brown-public-inquiry)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/sean-brown-daughter-says-uk-treating-family-with-contempt-as-supreme-court-appeal-lodged-66WDBLF3SNGZHLWCXQSXMU36XA/), [[2]](https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2025/04/03/uk-governments-failure-to-order-inquiry-into-sean-brown-murder-cannot-stand-appeal-court-rules/), [[7]](https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-01-03/sean-browns-family-criticises-decision-to-appeal-over-public-inquiry-ruling)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/sean-brown-daughter-says-uk-treating-family-with-contempt-as-supreme-court-appeal-lodged-66WDBLF3SNGZHLWCXQSXMU36XA/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2025/04/03/uk-governments-failure-to-order-inquiry-into-sean-brown-murder-cannot-stand-appeal-court-rules/> - The Court of Appeal in Belfast ruled that the UK government's refusal to order a public inquiry into the 1997 murder of GAA official Sean Brown was unlawful and in breach of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The court adjourned the case for four weeks to allow Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn to consider the judgment and confirm compliance. The ruling was welcomed by the Brown family, who have been campaigning for over 27 years for truth and justice regarding Mr. Brown's death.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-05-01/no-surprise-just-disappointment-say-brown-family-over-benn-inquiry-appeal> - The family of Sean Brown criticised the UK government's decision to seek leave for a Supreme Court appeal in the case concerning a public inquiry into his 1997 murder. In April, a court ruled that the government's refusal to order an inquiry was unlawful. The Secretary of State, Hilary Benn, applied for 'protective leave' to appeal to the Supreme Court if necessary. First Minister Michelle O'Neill described the move as 'cruel and inhumane', while Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stated the Brown family had already been waiting 'far too long' for answers.
4. <https://www.thejournal.ie/uk-government-failure-public-inquiry-murder-sean-brown-cannot-stand-6667192-Apr2025/> - Northern Ireland's Lady Chief Justice Siobhan Keegan ruled that the UK government's failure to order a public inquiry into the 1997 murder of GAA official Sean Brown was unlawful and in breach of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The court adjourned the case for four weeks to allow Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn to consider the judgment and confirm compliance. The ruling was welcomed by the Brown family, who have been campaigning for over 27 years for truth and justice regarding Mr. Brown's death.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-04-03/failure-to-order-sean-brown-public-inquiry-unlawful-court-rules> - The Court of Appeal in Belfast ruled that the UK government's failure to order a public inquiry into the 1997 murder of GAA official Sean Brown was unlawful and in breach of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The court adjourned the case for four weeks to allow Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn to consider the judgment and confirm compliance. The ruling was welcomed by the Brown family, who have been campaigning for over 27 years for truth and justice regarding Mr. Brown's death.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-04-30/government-plans-to-challenge-court-ruling-over-sean-brown-public-inquiry> - The UK government plans to challenge a court ruling that found its refusal to hold a public inquiry into the 1997 murder of GAA official Sean Brown was unlawful. In April, the Court of Appeal in Belfast ruled that the government's decision was in breach of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn has applied for 'protective leave' to appeal to the Supreme Court if necessary. First Minister Michelle O'Neill described the move as 'cruel and inhumane'.
7. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-01-03/sean-browns-family-criticises-decision-to-appeal-over-public-inquiry-ruling> - The family of murdered GAA official Sean Brown criticised the UK government's decision to appeal a court ruling that ordered a public inquiry into his 1997 death. High Court judge Mr Justice Michael Humphreys had previously found a 'clear and unambiguous obligation' on the state to investigate Mr. Brown's death. The Northern Ireland Office confirmed that an appeal was lodged on December 31. The Brown family expressed 'deep regret and disappointment' at the decision.