# Omagh Bombing Inquiry chair rules against redacting junior civil servants’ names in key documents



The chairman of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry has decisively rejected a request from the British government to redact the names of junior civil servants in documents essential to the investigation. This ruling, announced by Lord Turnbull, clarifies that the documents in question will be shared unredacted with core participants in the inquiry, allowing for a more transparent process as the enquiry seeks to establish accountability for one of Northern Ireland's most devastating terrorist attacks.

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) had argued that junior civil servants possess a greater expectation of privacy compared to their senior counterparts, raising security concerns about disclosing their identities. However, Lord Turnbull underscored that the matter at hand pertains solely to the distribution of documents among core participants and does not extend to potential public disclosures of these names. During the proceedings, he emphasised that all participants involved are bound by strict confidentiality agreements.

He stated, "This ruling is not concerned with the separate question of whether the content of any documentation... may, in due course, be aired in evidence and published in the media." The inquiry, which seeks to uncover whether the bombing could have been prevented by UK authorities, comes nearly 25 years after the tragedy that claimed the lives of 29 people, including a pregnant woman.

Moreover, discussions in recent procedural hearings included the stance of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) regarding the disclosure of names of individuals suspected of involvement in the 1998 attack. Importantly, the PSNI did not seek to redact names, instead conveying its perspective on the matter. Lord Turnbull indicated that the question surrounding the naming of suspects is relatively straightforward and agreed upon by all contributing counsel. The inquiry has established a framework for categorising suspected individuals based on previous media or parliamentary mentions, thereby distinguishing those with diminished expectations of privacy from those who have not been publicly identified.

The inquiry has been bolstered by a recent Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Irish governments, ensuring the cooperation of both nations in facilitating information sharing that is vital to the investigation. This agreement is viewed as a concerted effort to provide clarity and closure to the families affected by the bombing, which remains a painful chapter in Northern Ireland's history.

As the inquiry progresses, more complex questions regarding privacy rights and the security implications of naming suspects will be tackled, but the latest ruling signifies a step towards a more open examination of the circumstances surrounding one of the most horrific events of the Troubles.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/hilary-benn-government-dup-cabinet-dublin-b1222643.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-welcomes-memorandum-of-understanding-mou-between-the-omagh-bombing-inquiry-and-government-of-ireland), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-announces-chair-of-the-omagh-bombing-inquiry)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-publishes-terms-of-reference-for-omagh-bombing-inquiry), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/hilary-benn-government-dup-cabinet-dublin-b1222643.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/omagh-bomb-inquiry-chair-refuses-british-governments-bid-to-redact-civil-servant-names-CU24GS2YDREGZCCY6I37T2OYEY/> - The chairman of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry, Lord Turnbull, has rejected the British government's request to redact the names of junior civil servants in documents shared with other parties involved in the investigation. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) argued that junior civil servants have a greater expectation of privacy and raised security concerns over disclosing their names. Lord Turnbull's decision means that these documents will now be shared unredacted with other core participants. He clarified that this ruling pertains only to sharing documents with core participants and does not address the potential public release of these names during the inquiry proceedings.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-welcomes-memorandum-of-understanding-mou-between-the-omagh-bombing-inquiry-and-government-of-ireland> - The UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Hilary Benn, has welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Omagh Bombing Inquiry and the Government of Ireland. This agreement signifies the Irish Government's commitment to cooperate with the inquiry, facilitating the sharing of information and materials essential for the investigation. The MoU aims to support the inquiry's efforts in providing answers to the families affected by the 1998 Omagh bombing, which resulted in 29 fatalities, including a pregnant woman, and numerous injuries.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-publishes-terms-of-reference-for-omagh-bombing-inquiry> - The UK Government has published the Terms of Reference for the Omagh Bombing Inquiry, outlining the scope and objectives of the investigation. The inquiry, established under the Inquiries Act 2005, aims to determine whether the Omagh bombing in August 1998 could have been prevented by UK state authorities. The Terms of Reference focus on four grounds identified by the Northern Ireland High Court as giving rise to plausible arguments that the bombing could have been prevented, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the events leading up to the tragedy.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/hilary-benn-government-dup-cabinet-dublin-b1222643.html> - The Omagh Bombing Inquiry has reached a significant agreement with the Irish Government, allowing for the sharing of information and materials essential to the investigation. This formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlines the procedures for the lawful disclosure of materials from government departments and agencies in Ireland. The agreement is a positive step towards enabling the independent inquiry to access necessary information, with the aim of providing answers to the families affected by the 1998 Omagh bombing, which resulted in 29 fatalities and numerous injuries.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-announces-chair-of-the-omagh-bombing-inquiry> - The UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris, has appointed The Rt Hon Lord Turnbull as the Chair of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry. Lord Turnbull, a distinguished Scottish judge, will lead the independent statutory inquiry into the 1998 Omagh bombing, which resulted in 29 fatalities and numerous injuries. The inquiry aims to investigate whether the bombing could have been prevented by UK state authorities. Lord Turnbull's appointment follows a recommendation by the Lord Chief Justice for England and Wales and his counterparts across the UK.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/mar/16/omagh-bombing-intelligence-inquiry-mps> - In 2010, MPs called for an independent inquiry into the intelligence failures surrounding the Omagh bombing. The Panorama programme had reported that critical information was not passed to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) detectives investigating the case. While a subsequent review by the intelligence services commissioner, Sir Peter Gibson, rejected many of Panorama's assertions, the committee chairman, Sir Patrick Cormack, stated that many questions remained unanswered. The MPs criticised the government for refusing to release the full report, which was classified for security reasons, and called for a fresh examination of the intelligence.