# Families push for public inquiry into 1994 Chinook crash as sealed documents fuel distrust



The families of the 29 victims who perished in the 1994 Chinook helicopter crash on the Mull of Kintyre have intensified their campaign for a public inquiry into the tragedy, publishing 110 "critical questions" aimed at uncovering fresh insights into the incident. The crash claimed the lives of 25 intelligence personnel alongside four crew members as the Chinook Mk 2 ZD576 was en route from RAF Aldergrove in Northern Ireland to Fort George near Inverness. Despite the Ministry of Defence’s (MoD) repeated stance that the crash was a tragic accident and that no new evidence is likely to emerge from any further inquiry, the families dispute this, underscoring that many questions remain unanswered.

The Chinook Justice Campaign’s petition, which has garnered over 47,000 signatures, will be formally presented to Downing Street. The campaign highlights that key documents related to the crash remain sealed until 2094, a decision that has been deeply criticised by the families as a betrayal and an erosion of trust not only in the MoD but also in the government itself. David Hill, a technical expert for the campaign, has expressed frustration at the government's refusal to allow a judge-led inquiry and the ongoing secrecy, emphasizing that the extensive list of questions targets fundamental issues such as the mission’s authorisation, aircraft selection, and whether proper risk warnings were given to passengers and crew.

Legal actions are now being pursued to compel the government to conduct a thorough public inquiry. Solicitor Mark Stephens, representing the families, has launched a judicial review arguing that the MoD failed to honour its human rights obligations by not ordering a public inquiry and by neglecting critical information that could shed light on the helicopter’s airworthiness. The families’ legal challenge asserts that prior investigations have fallen short, either individually or collectively, in discharging their investigative duties adequately.

Government officials have referenced a series of reviews and investigations into the crash, including an independent review published by Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox. This review recommended setting aside the initial verdict of gross negligence against the pilots and suggested the MoD consider an apology to the pilots' families. Additionally, it called for a reconsideration of policy concerning the transport of personnel with essential national security roles. Notably, the original gross negligence verdict against Flight Lieutenants Richard Cook and Jonathan Tapper was overturned by the government in 2011 after a prolonged campaign by bereaved families.

Despite these developments, the families remain dissatisfied. Jenni Balmer-Hornby, whose father was among the victims, insists the unanswered questions are grounded in evidence previously withheld or misrepresented, warranting a transparent and independent inquiry to honour the memory of those lost and restore faith in the process. Joel Hornby, who lost his father in the crash and recently visited the memorial site with his young son, publicly called on Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to intervene and ensure that the MoD’s decision to block a new inquiry and to impose a century-long document seal is reversed.

The MoD has maintained that the mishap was a tragic accident thoroughly investigated through six inquiries and that new inquiries are unlikely to reveal fresh evidence. However, the ongoing dispute underscores the families' demand for accountability and transparency after nearly three decades. The Chinook Justice Campaign’s persistence continues to highlight critical gaps in the official narrative, pressing for public and judicial scrutiny that they believe is essential for justice to be served.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/chinook-helicopter-crash-families-publish-36094691), [[6]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/families-of-chinook-crash-victims-to-launch-legal-action-against-mod-5155282), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/keir-starmer-ministry-of-defence-prime-minister-raf-northern-ireland-b2783515.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/chinook-helicopter-crash-families-publish-36094691), [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/mod-families-prime-minister-government-raf-b2782778.html), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/keir-starmer-ministry-of-defence-prime-minister-raf-northern-ireland-b2783515.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/bulletin/news/chinook-crash-mull-of-kintyre-legal-action-b2761935.html), [[6]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/families-of-chinook-crash-victims-to-launch-legal-action-against-mod-5155282)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mod-publishes-independent-review-of-chinook-accident), [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/mod-families-prime-minister-government-raf-b2782778.html), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/keir-starmer-ministry-of-defence-prime-minister-raf-northern-ireland-b2783515.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/chinook-helicopter-crash-families-publish-36094691), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/keir-starmer-ministry-of-defence-prime-minister-raf-northern-ireland-b2783515.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/chinook-helicopter-crash-families-publish-36094691), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/keir-starmer-ministry-of-defence-prime-minister-raf-northern-ireland-b2783515.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/chinook-helicopter-crash-families-publish-36094691> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/bulletin/news/chinook-crash-mull-of-kintyre-legal-action-b2761935.html> - Families of the 29 victims of the 1994 Chinook helicopter crash on the Mull of Kintyre are initiating legal action against the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for not ordering a public inquiry. They seek a High Court judge to review previously unexamined information that could shed light on the helicopter's airworthiness, alleging the government's failure to uphold human rights obligations by not conducting an inquiry. Solicitor Mark Stephens, representing the families, asserts that the MoD failed to apply appropriate safeguards, leading to the call for a judicial review into the government's failure to hold a public inquiry.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mod-publishes-independent-review-of-chinook-accident> - Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox published the conclusions of an independent review into the Chinook Mk2 helicopter crash of June 1994 on the Mull of Kintyre, which resulted in the deaths of all 29 people on board. The review, led by Lord Philip and assisted by three Privy Counsellors, examined the evidence relating to the findings of the Board of Inquiry into the accident. The review made three key recommendations: the finding that the pilots were negligent to a gross degree should be set aside, the MoD should consider offering an apology to the families of the pilots, and the MoD should reconsider its policy and procedures for the transport of personnel whose responsibilities are vital to national security.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deputy-pm-confirms-mull-of-kintyre-helicopter-disaster-inquiry> - Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg confirmed a new independent legal inquiry into the 1994 Mull of Kintyre helicopter disaster. The review, announced to the House of Commons by Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox in May, was confirmed by Mr Clegg during Prime Minister’s Questions. RAF Chinook HC2 ZD576 crashed on the Mull of Kintyre in western Scotland 16 years ago, resulting in the deaths of all 25 passengers and four crew members. The Deputy Prime Minister promised that the new review would be completely independent and conducted by a respected lawyer who is independent of the government and who has not previously expressed a view on the disaster.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/mod-families-prime-minister-government-raf-b2782778.html> - Families of the victims of the 1994 RAF Chinook crash have criticised the Ministry of Defence for refusing a public inquiry into the incident and sealing key documents for 100 years. Relatives of the 29 victims who died on the aircraft have written to the Prime Minister to demand a full, independent, judge-led public inquiry to establish the truth into the disaster, accusing the MoD of 'losing its moral compass'. RAF Chinook ZD576 crashed on the Mull of Kintyre on its way from RAF Aldergrove in Northern Ireland to Fort George in Scotland, and all 25 passengers and four crew members were killed in the incident. A verdict of gross negligence against the pilots, Flight Lieutenants Richard Cook and Jonathan Tapper, from a review into the incident by two senior RAF officers in 1995 was overturned by the Government in 2011 after a 16-year campaign by the families. Relatives have now written to the Prime Minister to intervene and are seeking a judicial review in the High Court.
6. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/families-of-chinook-crash-victims-to-launch-legal-action-against-mod-5155282> - The families of those killed in a Chinook helicopter crash on the Mull of Kintyre in 1994 have said they are beginning legal action against the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for not ordering a public inquiry. They want a High Court judge to be able to review information which they say was not included in previous investigations, and which they believe will shed new light on the airworthiness of the helicopter. RAF Chinook ZD576 was carrying 25 British intelligence personnel from RAF Aldergrove in Northern Ireland to a conference at Fort George near Inverness when it crashed in foggy weather on June 2, 1994. All 25 passengers – made up of personnel from MI5, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British Army – were killed, along with the helicopter’s four crew members. The families of the victims, who have coalesced into the Chinook Justice Campaign, said failing to order a public inquiry is a breach of the UK Government’s human rights obligations. In a letter to the Government 31 years after the crash, the group said: 'The investigations conducted to date, whether considered individually or in combination, have failed to discharge the investigative duty.'
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/keir-starmer-ministry-of-defence-prime-minister-raf-northern-ireland-b2783515.html> - The son of a victim of the RAF 1994 Chinook helicopter crash is calling on the Prime Minister to intervene and allow a public inquiry after visiting the site of the disaster. RAF Chinook ZD576 was carrying 25 British intelligence personnel from RAF Aldergrove in Northern Ireland to a conference at Fort George near Inverness when it crashed in foggy weather on June 2 1994 on the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland. All 25 passengers – made up of personnel from MI5, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British Army – were killed, along with the helicopter’s four crew members. Joel Hornby, whose father Major Anthony Hornby was one of the victims, visited a memorial cairn at the crash site on Saturday and again on Sunday. He and other families have said they will press on with seeking a judicial review after the Ministry of Defence (MoD) dismissed their demands for a judge-led public inquiry into the incident, and have written to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer asking him to intervene. Mr Hornby, who was seven when his father died, visited the site with his one-year-old son and laid a wreath at the cairn along with a note which read 'Dad, we are still fighting for you'. Speaking afterwards Mr Hornby, who lives in Berlin in Germany, said: 'We, the families of those lost, have still been denied answers over 30 years on. The MoD has rejected our request for a full judge-led public inquiry, and furthermore, has sealed documents relating to the crash for 100 years. We are requesting that the Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer live up to his promises on duty of candour and overrule the MoD’s decision.' He has also urged people to sign a change.org petition calling on the Prime Minister to overturn the MoD decision and release the documents. Following the crash, the Chinook’s pilots, Flight Lieutenants Richard Cook and Jonathan Tapper, were accused of gross negligence, but this verdict was overturned by the UK Government 17 years later following a campaign by the families. A subsequent review by Lord Philip set out 'numerous concerns' raised by those who worked on the Chinooks, with the MoD’s testing centre at Boscombe Down in Wiltshire declaring the Chinook Mk2 helicopters 'unairworthy' prior to the crash. In a statement after the calls made by the families on Friday an MoD spokesperson said: 'The Mull of Kintyre crash was a tragic accident, and our thoughts and sympathies remain with the families, friends and colleagues of all those who died. We understand that the lack of certainty about the cause of the crash has added to the distress of the families. We provided a detailed and considered response to the pre-action protocol letter stating the reasons why we cannot accept the demand for establishing a new public inquiry. It’s unlikely that a public inquiry would identify any new evidence or reach new conclusions on the basis of existing evidence. The accident has already been the subject of six inquiries and investigations, including an independent judge-led review.'