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HISTORICAL ENQUIRIES TEAM REPORT ON THE DEATH OF WILLIAM MCGREANERY IS WELCOME BUT RAISES DISTURBING QUESTIONS

British Irish RIGHTS WATCH welcomes the Historical Enquiries Team's (HET) report on the shooting of William Greanery by the army in 1971. It has taken far too long, but it must be a relief to his family to know that Mr Greanery has been exonerated as a wholly innocent man after all these years.

However, his case raises disturbing questions. The then Attorney General's decision not to charge the soldier concerned with murder, despite the recommendation of RUC Superintendent Frank Lagan, or, indeed, with any offence, effectively created an atmosphere of impunity. This shooting was followed by a number of other cases over a period of several years in which soldiers shot unarmed civilians but claimed that they had thought the victims were armed.

Mr Greanery's case is one of many in the early 1970s where police investigations were thwarted by completely inadequate investigations by the army's Special Investigations Branch, whose methods have been heavily criticised by the HET.

Jane Winter, Director of British Irish RIGHTS WATCH, said, "The tragedy of Mr Greanery's death extends far beyond the grief of his immediate family. The deployment of the army in Northern Ireland in peacetime was an extraordinary step which should have been put under careful scrutiny. The failure of the prosecuting authorities to call individual soldiers to account, coupled with inadequate internal investigations by the army into the shootings of unarmed civilians, led to a number of avoidable deaths and contributed to prolonging and deepening the conflict."

ENDS

WINNER OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY HUMAN RIGHTS PRIZE 2009
WINNER OF THE IRISH WORLD DAMIEN GAFFNEY MEMORIAL AWARD 2008
WINNER OF THE BEACON PRIZE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2007

Notes for editors:

British Irish RIGHTS WATCH (BIRW) is an independent non-governmental organisation that has been monitoring the human rights dimension of the conflict, and the peace process, in Northern Ireland since 1990. Our vision is of a Northern Ireland in which respect for human rights is integral to all its institutions and experienced by all who live there. Our mission is to secure respect for human rights in Northern Ireland and to disseminate the human rights lessons learned from the Northern Ireland conflict in order to promote peace, reconciliation and the prevention of conflict. BIRW's services are available, free of charge, to anyone whose human rights have been violated because of the conflict, regardless of religious, political or community affiliations. BIRW take no position on the eventual constitutional outcome of the conflict.

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