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Michael Gallagher

THURSDAY
10/01/2008
16:51:20

Omagh families praise judge

Relatives of the Omagh bomb victims today welcomed a judge's determination to start their multi-million pound civil action against those

they believe responsible for the Real IRA atrocity.

At the High Court in Belfast Mr Justice Morgan made clear he was anxious there was no slippage from the April 7 date he has set.

Families of the 29 victims and those who were injured have mounted a £14 million claim against those they believe responsible. Following the acquittal last month of South Armagh man Sean Hoey on all charges relating to the August 1998 bombing and other Real IRA attacks they see it as their only chance to see someone held to account.

Hoey is not among the five men they started the legal proceedings against seven years ago.

During a brief pre-trial hearing the judge set a series of deadlines for legal teams preparing for the case.

He told them: "I am anxious to set a timetable to ensure the case proceeds on 7th April."

Michael Gallagher, whose 21-year-old son Aidan died in the bombing, was in court and said afterwards: "There is definitely movement, that is what the families need. There has been dragging of feet for far too long."

The case is expected to last between four and eight weeks, and Mr Gallagher said: "We would like to have this resolved by the 10th anniversary."

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While the action is being taken privately by the families, former Northern Ireland Secretary Paul Murphy committed the Government to providing £800,000 towards the estimated £1.5 million the families raised to fight the case.

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