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The words 'not guilty' cut through the families like a

knife

by  **Unison**
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Friday December 21 2007

It was shortly before 4pm yesterday afternoon when Mr Justice Weir delivered his "not guilty" verdict in the Omagh Bomb trial to a packed Belfast Court.

It devastated the watching relatives. And it left them wondering where they go now in their long-running quest for justice and truth.

It took Mr Justice Weir less than an hour and a half to acquit south Armagh electrician Sean Hoey of all the 56 charges against him.

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In the body of the Court, relatives of the Omagh victims sat listening impassively as the judge slowly began to pick the prosecution case against Sean Hoey apart, piece by piece.

In the dock Hoey, dressed in a grey and white open-necked shirt and charcoal jacket, stared straight ahead and showed no emotion as Mr Justice Weir said the prosecution had failed to satisfy him to any acceptable standard that he (Hoey) could be connected to any of the charges.

Elsewhere in the packed courtroom, as Mr Justice Weir lambasted police, describing their attitude as "cavalier" and "seemingly thoughtless and heartless" it began to dawn on some of the relatives that there would be an acquittal.

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When the judge finally announced his verdict, the words "not guilty" cut through the Omagh relatives like a scythe through a swathe of hay.

Many, clearly visibly upset by the verdict, were even more distressed when the family and friends of Sean Hoey clapped and applauded in an unprecedented show of support.

Relatives of the Omagh victims appeared shocked and stunned. Dazed and numb they struggled to come to terms with the stark realisation that their nine long years of campaigning for justice and the truth had delivered nothing.

Others sat in their seats, heads bowed, struggling to control their emotions. Back in Omagh, they face the prospect, that for them, the legal process is now at an end.

- *Chris Anderson*

trial fiasco

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