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Court to decide how inquiry witnesses will give evidence

([Irish News](#))

A court is being asked to decide if police witnesses at the Robert Hamill murder inquiry should give their evidence in public.

The inquiry is appealing against a recent High Court judgement which overturned its decision not to allow officers to be screened and known only by an initial.

The case was briefly before the court yesterday (Thursday) when the two-day appeal was fixed to start on January 24.

Last month Mr Justice Morgan upheld an application for judicial review brought on behalf of 20 retired and serving officers who claimed their lives would be at risk if their identities became known.

The judge did not order the inquiry panel to grant anonymity but his ruling meant individual officers would be able apply for secrecy before giving their evidence.

The inquiry was due to start in September but has had to be postponed indefinitely because of the judicial review and now the appeal.

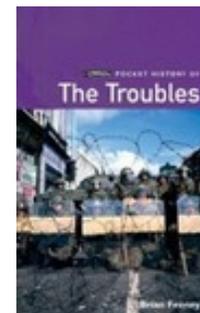
Next month's Appeal Court ruling may not be the end of the legal process, as observers have hinted the case may end up in the House of Lords.

Robert Hamill, a 25-year-old Catholic, was beaten and kicked to death by a loyalist mob in Portadown in 1997.

Police have denied claims that four RUC officers in a Land Rover saw what was happening and failed to intervene.

The government set up the inquiry to determine if there was any wrongful act or omission by police which facilitated Mr Hamill's death or obstruction of the investigation into it.

December 16, 2006



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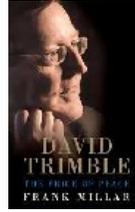
This article appeared first in the December 15, 2006 edition of the [Irish News](#).

on thursday

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