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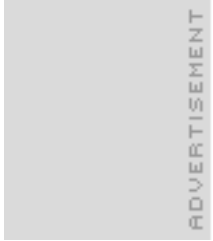
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Last Updated: 06/03/2008 20:18

SF anger over IRA commemoration ban

Sinn Fein has reacted angrily after being banned from honouring an IRA woman shot dead by the SAS with an event in the public rooms in the Stormont Parliament Building.

The party had planned to honour the memory of Mairead Farrell, one of three IRA members shot dead 20 years ago while on a bombing mission in Gibraltar.

The commemoration was due to take place in the main Long Gallery function room tomorrow as part of celebrations to mark International Women's Day.

However, unionists were outraged at the idea and demanded it be halted - after a series of meetings over several days the Assembly's all-party governing body finally tonight decided it was not appropriate to hold the controversial event in the room.

The Sinn Fein MLA who planned the event, Jennifer McCann, was furious. She said: "The decision is unfair and undemocratic. The building at Stormont is supposed to be a shared public space for everyone."

She said the party was very disappointed. "All of the other parties on the Assembly Commission, the SDLP, the Alliance Party, the UUP and the DUP all blocked this event to mark International Women's Day."

Ms McCann added: "If the building at Stormont cannot be a shared space that reflects the history and culture of all the people in society then it must become a neutral space. "It cannot continue to reflect one tradition and one culture."

Sinn Fein would be meeting in the morning to consider their response to the decision, she said. However the party was expected to try to press ahead with the event in its own private office at Stormont.

Farrell was jailed between 1976 and 1986 for the bombing of the Conway Hotel in Dunmurry, outside Belfast. In Gibraltar, keys to a car found in her handbag led to the discovery in Spain of five packages of Semtex explosive.

PA

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