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Veteran civil rights campaigner Eamon Melaugh dies



Eamon Melaugh, a veteran civil rights campaigner in Londonderry, has died aged 92

8 December 2025

Veteran civil rights campaigner and activist Eamon Melaugh has died at the age of 92.

Mr Melaugh was heavily involved with the civil rights movement in Londonderry and co-founded the Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC) in

in 1968, which campaigned for better housing conditions and provision for Catholic families.

He also became well known as the voice behind the microphone of the pirate station **Radio Free Derry** which broadcast during the **Battle of the Bogside** in August 1969.

Three days of violent clashes during the Battle of the Bogside are regarded by many as the beginning of the **Troubles in Northern Ireland**.



Riots raged for three days in what later became known as the Battle of the Bogside in Londonderry in August 1969

Rising tensions between the nationalist residents of the Bogside in Derry and the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) over a scheduled Apprentice Boys parade in the city brought British troops on to the streets of Northern Ireland for the first time.

After three days of fighting, a truce was called and the barricades surrounding the Bogside were replaced by a white line.

During the unrest, Mr Melaugh and fellow activist Eamonn McCann operated intermittent broadcasts from Radio Free Derry, based in the Rossville Street flats.

The makeshift pirate radio station's schedule was comprised of music, interviews, updates and political commentary.

The radio equipment, which was smuggled to Northern Ireland from over the border in the Republic of Ireland, was later uncovered by soldiers during house searches in the Bogside in the years after 1969.



Eamonn McCann says Eamon Melaugh will be remembered as a "defining character in the civil rights movement in Derry"

Eamonn McCann described Mr Melaugh as a "distinctive character" who played "a huge role in the early civil rights movement in Derry".

"He was an eloquent and uncompromising person who didn't suffer fools gladly.

"I had many run-ins with Eamon and if he didn't agree with me - which happened on many occasions - he would tell me, often quite bluntly.

"He was incredibly honest and direct, which was quite unusual at that time."

Mr McCann fondly remembers his time with Mr Melaugh in the Derry Housing Action Committee and during their time together at Radio Free Derry.

"The station may have been limited in terms of actual range, but certainly not limited in impact.

"Eamon was one of the main announcers and had a style and confidence that resonated with those listening.

"That period, that station, became an important part of the history of our city."

He said Mr Melaugh will be remembered as one of the "defining characters of the civil rights movement in Derry who made a distinct and valuable contribution to the people who live here".

Mr Melaugh died peacefully at his home, surrounded by family, on Monday.

His Requiem Mass will take place at St Columba's Church, Longtower, on

Wednesday, with burial afterwards in Derry's City Cemetery.

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