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## Politics

### Decision on IRA woman's commemoration delayed

Tuesday, February 26, 2008

By David Young

A decision on whether to ban a controversial Stormont commemoration for an IRA woman shot dead by undercover British soldiers will be made this week after the Assembly's governing body last night declined to make a final ruling.

The Assembly Commission had been asked to examine the Sinn Fein plan to mark the life of Mairead Farrell, who was gunned down by the SAS in Gibraltar 20 years ago, following complaints by unionists.

In the wake of Sinn Fein's proposal, DUP Assembly member Jeffrey Donaldson suggested an event be staged at Stormont to mark the role of the SAS in combating terrorism.

A commission spokesman said members had met to discuss issues around the staging of events in Parliament Buildings but had decided to reconvene on Thursday to discuss the matter.

Farrell (31) was gunned down by members of the SAS along with fellow IRA members Sean Savage and Daniel McCann in March 1988 as they planned a bomb attack on a military band in the British territory.

Sinn Fein MLA Jennifer McCann had applied to recognise Farrell's life at an event in Stormont's Long Gallery as part of International Women's Day.

However, protests were lodged by the UUP and DUP, whose leader Ian Paisley led a delegation to meet Stormont Speaker William Hay. Mr Hay referred the matter to the Commission.

Mr Paisley said the plans would undermine the parliament's status as a shared space.

"Events commemorating the lives of dead IRA criminals who were intercepted by the forces of law and order on their way to kill innocent people have no place in Parliament Buildings," he said.

"The DUP will oppose any commemoration for murderers in Stormont and will use all of our influence to prevent this event from taking place. I am confident that we are bringing closure to this issue.

"As First Minister I would urge maturity amongst MLAs as to how they deal with these issues."

However, Jennifer McCann rejected the DUP claims.

"Mairead Farrell was a strong advocate for equality for women and she organised and participated in a number of events both inside Armagh Women's prison and outside to celebrate International Women's Day," she said.

"To the republican constituency that I represent Mairead was a strong, inspirational woman who is still highly respected and held in high esteem and I believe that a celebration of her life to mark International Women's Day is a fitting tribute."

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