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Victims challenge may see ministers in court

BY Staff Reporter

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FIRST Minister Ian Paisley and Dep-uty First Minister Martin McGuinness may be called before the High Court to answer questions about the appointment of four victims' commissioners.

Lawyers for a woman whose parents were murdered by the IRA said they were considering moves to subpoena them as part of their challenge to the process.

Michelle Williamson is attempting to have the appointments made by Mr Paisley and Mr McGuinness in January quashed, claiming that the commissioners are unacceptable to innocent victims of violence.

Her senior counsel, Barry MacDonald QC, has already described an affidavit supplied by an official within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister as defective.

The minutes of meetings between the two most senior members of the executive and their Stormont advisers are also being sought in order to scrutinise the decision-making process.

During a brief hearing yesterday the court heard that an official application may be made next week to subpoena Mr Paisley and Mr McGuinness.

Ms Williamson, whose mother and father George and Gillian died in the 1993 bomb attack on Belfast's Shankill Road, has been backed in her legal fight by up to 15 victims.

Her opposition has focused on the presence among the commissioners of Patricia MacBride, whose brother has been de-scribed as an IRA volunteer killed on active service.

The other three members are RUC widow Bertha McDougal, former broadcaster Mike Nesbitt and Brendan McAllister, former director of Mediation Northern Ireland.

The case, being heard by Mr Justice John Gillen, was adjourned until next week.

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