



NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

**Press Release: Immediate**

**Date: 5 May 2011**

**Northern Ireland and Irish Human Rights Commissions comment on Denis Donaldson Inquest**

In response to the Coroner's hearing which takes place today (5 May 2011) regarding Denis Donaldson, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights Commission have called for a human rights compliant inquest into his death.

The Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Professor Monica McWilliams, said:

*"Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights places a duty on the state to protect life and also to investigate death. One of the questions that should be addressed at inquest is what, if anything, did the PSNI and/or the Gardaí know of a risk to Mr Donaldson's life and, if they knew there was a risk, what measures did they take to protect him".*

The President of the Irish Human Rights Commission, Dr Maurice Manning, added:

*"We are also concerned that five years after Mr Donaldson's murder this inquest has still not taken place. Additionally we have heard from the family their concerns about the lack of disclosure and information from the Coroner and the Gardaí. Human rights law requires that the family in these types of cases must be involved in*

*the investigative proceedings to safeguard their legitimate interests".*

## **ENDS**

### **Further information:**

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### **Notes to editors:**

1. Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights places a duty on the state to protect life and also to investigate death: The obligation to investigate is not confined to cases where it can be established that death was caused by agents of the State but arises where life has been lost in circumstances potentially engaging the responsibility of the State.
2. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is an independent statutory body first proposed in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (1998) and established in 1999 by the Northern Ireland Act (1998).
3. The Irish Human Rights Commission is also an independent statutory body pursuant to the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (1998) and established in 2001 under the Human Rights Commission Act 2000.
4. The Irish Human Rights Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission meet as a Joint Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss matters of a cross jurisdictional nature (as set out in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, 1998).