



January 30, 2007

H.Con.Res. 20 – Calling on the Government of the United Kingdom to immediately establish a full, independent, and public judicial inquiry into the murder of Northern Ireland defense attorney Patrick Finucane, as recommended by Judge Peter Cory as part of the Weston Park Agreement, in order to move forward on the Northern Ireland peace process.

Floor Situation

H.Con.Res. 20 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ) on January 9, 2007. By unanimous consent, the Committee agreed to seek consideration of H.Con.Res. 20 under suspension of the rules.

H.Con.Res. 20 is expected to be considered on January 30, 2007.

**Note: similar legislation passed the House by a vote of 390 – 5 ([Roll no. 159](#)) on May 18, 2006; Calling on the Government of the United Kingdom to immediately establish a full, independent, public judicial inquiry into the murder of Northern Ireland defense attorney Patrick Finucane, as recommended by Judge Peter Cory as part of the Weston Park agreement, in order to move forward on the Northern Ireland Peace Process (H.Res. 740).*

Background

Murder

Human rights defense attorney and solicitor Patrick Finucane was brutally murdered in front of his wife and children at his home in Belfast on February 12, 1989.

Investigation

In July of 2001 the Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom appointed retired Canadian Supreme Court Judge Peter Cory to investigate the allegations of collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and British security forces in the murder of Mr. Finucane and other individuals.

Findings

Judge Cory reported to the Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom in April

2004 that sufficient evidence of collusion existed to warrant a full, independent, and public judicial inquiry into the murder of Mr. Finucane and recommended that a public inquiry take place without delay.

U.K. Government Action

The Government of the United Kingdom in April 2005 adopted the Inquiries Act 2005 which empowered the Government to block scrutiny of state actions and limited independent action by the judiciary in inquiries held under its terms. After enactment of this legislation establishing new limited inquiry procedures, the Government announced that an inquiry into the murder of Mr. Finucane would be established and would operate under terms of the new legislation.

**Note: Judge Cory, officials of the United States Government, international organizations, and Mr. Finucane's family objected to the government's actions, suggesting that the newly adopted U.K. law would limit the ability of any inquiry to properly investigate the murder, and they have urged the U.K. Government to reconsider their position.*

Summary

H.Con.Res. 20:

- 1) States Congress' support for the Administration in calling on the Government of the United Kingdom to establish a full, independent, and public judicial inquiry into the 1989 murder of human rights attorney Patrick Finucane
- 2) Urges the U.K. Government to establish an inquiry which would enjoy the full cooperation and support of the Finucane family, the people of Northern Ireland, and the international community as recommended by Judge Cory
- 3) Calls on the Government of the United Kingdom to reconsider its position on the matter of an inquiry into the murder of Mr. Finucane, to amend the Inquiries Act of 2005, and to take fully into account the objections of Judge Cory, objections raised by officials of the United States Government, other governments, and international bodies, and the objections raised by Mr. Finucane's family
- 4) Expresses deepest condolences to the family of Patrick Finucane and commends their pursuit of justice in Mr. Finucane's murder and their willingness to testify before committees of the House of Representatives

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