UN SDG #16 Project: NI Troubles Victims Assistance Stakeholder Profiles

1. **Michael Gallagher – Omagh Group**

On the 15th of August 1998, a red Vauxhall Cavalier pulled up in front of the main courthouse in Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. The car contained a bomb inside, which exploded at around 3:10 PM British Standard Time that day. The explosion took the lives of twenty-nine people including Michael Gallagher’s son, Aiden Gallagher, and injured hundreds of others. The Real IRA claimed responsibility for the bombing. However, time and time again specific Real IRA members suspected of carrying out the bombing and placing the car bomb where blew up, have managed to somehow evade consequences for their actions. This is in part due to government corruption, with the government not being able to heed prior warnings given days before the attack, something that was eventually revealed by the police ombudsman. To this day Michael Gallagher has led the effort to get justice for the victims of the bombing and their families, even when the UK and Irish parliament may not pay attention to it.

1. **Julie Hambleton – Justice for The Birmingham 21**

On the 21st of November 1974, a series of bombings occurred at two pubs in Birmingham, England took the lives of 21 people and injured 180 two others. The Provisional IRA never claimed responsibility for the attack but it was insinuated by the authorities that the Provisional IRA did it. Eventually, a year later, six Irishmen who were arrested in the hours after the bombing were sentenced to life imprisonment, a judgment that was later declared unruly and quashed by the Court of Appeals. For years, the Birmingham 6 were wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for being bombers. Meanwhile, the victims and their families did not believe the West Midlands Police were truly doing their part and trying to bring the real bombers to justice. After all, corruption ran rampant in the West Midlands Police back then and it still does today. Julie Hambleton lost her sister Maxine in the bombing; as a result, she has been campaigning for justice for the victims and their families to this day, trying to hold the police accountable in finding the true perpetrators.

1. **Raymond McCord – Outspoken Critic of UVF**

Raymond McCord Jr, the son of Raymond McCord Sr., was killed by the loyalist paramilitary group the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1997. Initially, junior joined the UVF because he was trying to get family protection from previous scuffles with the Ulster defense association or UDA another paramilitary group. But ultimately this didn’t help junior much later on since eventually, he found out his superior was involved in the drug trafficking trade and as a result, he had junior killed because he didn’t want junior to know that knowledge. Ever since then, senior has been an outspoken advocate against the UVF and critic of the UVF hoping that eventually, the British government will provide some compensation or reparation for what happened to his son.

1. **Billy McManus - advocate for the families of the Sean Graham Bookmakers, Belfast 1992, Shooting Victims**

On the 5th of February 1992, a mass shooting occurred at a Sean Graham bookmaker shop in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Five innocent civilians were killed along with nine others injured. The shooting was carried out by none other than the Ulster Defense Association or UDA, a loyalist pro-British pro-Protestant paramilitary group that claimed responsibility using the cover name “Ulster Freedom Fighters” for this specific incident. The UDA claimed the attack was a revenge response towards the Provisional IRA for the Teebane bombing which the Provisional IRA perpetrated the previous month. Multiple investigations occurred in the aftermath of the shooting to find out exactly what the UDA’s role was and how involved they truly were in the shooting. Ultimately the investigations by the Northern Ireland police ombudsman’s office yielded something very disturbing, the trend of “collusive behaviour” between Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) police officers and UDA informers leading up to the shooting. Since this realization victims and their families of the shooting have been advocating for compensation and reparations from a government that has refused to give any sort of justice or reparations yet for what happened.

1. **John Teggart - advocate for the families of the Ballymurphy Massacre, Belfast 1971, Victims**

Between the 9th and 11th of August 1971, a series of shootings occurred in the Ballymurphy neighborhood of Belfast, Northern Ireland. These shootings were a result of Operation Demetrius, a British Army operation that involved the internment or mass arrest of Irish people in Northern Ireland without trial. The shooting was specifically carried out by the 1st Battalion, Parachute Regiment of the British Army which was stationed in this neighborhood in Belfast at the time. This army regiment indiscriminately killed 11 innocent civilians during that two to three-day time frame in this neighborhood. The Ballymurphy massacre eventually earned the nickname Belfast’s Bloody Sunday, a reference to the killing of innocent civilians a few months later in Derry by the same battalion. Numerous military inquests, led by the military and the ombudsman’s office in 1972 returned open verdicts to all those accused of killing innocent civilians in that battalion. Decades after the fact, a 2021 coroner report found that all those killed in Ballymurphy were killed “without justification” and were innocent. It is important to note that sometime in July or August of 2022 a report came out about soldiers being arrested and tried for the Ballymurphy massacre along with civil suits being filed against the soldiers. A recent bill in British Parliament referred to as the “Legacy Bill” will not let the civil suits go forward if enacted into law, and pressure is mounting in London for no more civil suits of British Army officers and soldiers in this case. Despite the report about soldiers being arrested Related to the massacre, not many were arrested, and financial reparations have not been made at all to the victims. John Teggart is one of the lead activists for the victims and their families.

1. **Kate Nash– advocate for the families of the Bloody Sunday Massacre Victims**

On the 30th of January 1972, a mass shooting occurred in the Bogside neighborhood of Derry, Northern Ireland. In a similar manner to what happened in Belfast the previous year in the Ballymurphy neighborhood, the 1st Battalion, Parachute Regiment of the British Army indiscriminately opened fire on innocent civilians, killing 26 innocent civilians specifically. In a similar vein to the Ballymurphy massacre majority of the victims were Catholic, and while the Catholics initially opened the British Army with welcome arms to cities like Belfast and Derry, relations deteriorated quickly in the early 1970s. The British Army was initially seen by Irish Catholics as the lesser evil to the RUC since they weren’t aligned ethnically and religiously with Ulster Protestants. One of the 26 killed was William Nash and one of the people in many people injured by the shooting but not a casualty was William Nash’s father Alexander Nash. William’s sister Kate Nash is one of the lead advocates of victims and their families of the Bloody Sunday massacre today in the long struggle for justice and reparations from the British government for what happened. On the 15th of June 2010, the Lord Saville of Newdigate, a justice in the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom at the time, created an inquiry into Bloody Sunday, known as the Saville report. The Salvo report discussed the soldier’s misdoings on bloody Sunday and how they are responsible. David Cameron, the prime minister at the time issued a public apology to the victim’s families in a speech to the House of Commons acknowledging the British Army fired the first shot. Despite the government’s recognition of the atrocities, zero reparations have been paid yet.

1. **Sergeant Joe Campbell – Catholic RUC police officer killed by the Provisional IRA**

Joe Campbell Sr., the father of Joe Campbell Jr and eight others, was killed in 1977 by members of the Provisional IRA while on duty at the Royal Ulster Constabulary police station in the coastal village of Cushendall, on the northern coast of Northern Ireland. Both senior and junior are Catholics, and for quite some time it was suspected that a member of the loyalist paramilitary UVF killed senior, specifically one who colluded with the RUC and the government. However, following the death of the UVF member that supposedly killed him, The police ombudsman’s office for Northern Ireland discovered that they suspected the wrong person in the killing of senior, and an unknown provisional IRA member or group of provisional IRA members are the ones who actually killed him. To this day junior has been advocating for justice for his dad’s murder, hoping that eventually one day the provisional IRA member or members that killed his father would be brought to justice and that any officers in the RUC who colluded with the provisional IRA or the UVF will be held accountable for their actions.

1. **Lorraine McCausland – Loyalist woman raped and murdered by fellow loyalists.**

Lorraine McCausland, the mother of Craig McCausland, was killed and raped by the Ulster Defense Association, which often went under the nickname Ulster Freedom Fighters on the 8th of March 1987. Her body was found in a stream in the Forthriver section of Belfast. Fourteen men affiliated with the UDA were arrested in connection with her rape and murder. However, seven of these men were released in June of 2017, and none of the 14 men were ever formally charged with murder or rape. Since her death, all the way up until his death his death in 2005, Craig fought for justice to be served and for the men accused of his mother his mother’s rape and murder to be criminally charged and put away for life. However, it is unclear now who is carrying on Craig’s legacy in terms of seeking out justice for Lorraine’s murder. Since none of the men that remain in prison have been formally charged, it’s looking highly unlikely they might be charged at all. There is high concern that the legacy bill will let them all be released.