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Ronnie Flanagan
Chief Constable
RUC Headquarters
Brooklyn
Knock
Belfast

19th June 1997

Dear Chief Constable,

Robert Hamill

We have been asked by Robert's sister, Diane Hamill, to write to you on her behalf to seek clarification on certain matters. As you will be aware, Ms Hamill has made a complaint to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints concerning the alleged role of certain RUC officers at the time of the attack which led to his death.

Ms Hamill has had a letter dated 9th May from the RUC Complaints & Disciplinary Department telling her the names of the police officers (Detective Chief Superintendent McBurney, Superintendent Anderson and Chief Inspector Bradley) who are investigating her complaint. On 22nd May DCI McBurney wrote to her solicitor saying, amongst other things, "As far as I am aware, no criminal proceedings are contemplated against your client in respect of this incident," and asking her to arrange for Ms Hamill to attend Portadown RUC station for an interview about the complaint.

Clearly this is a letter produced in a standard format, but the reference to criminal proceedings against Ms Hamill, even in the negative, was unnecessary and insensitive. Furthermore, given that her complaint is against officers from Portadown RUC station, the suggested venue (even though she was invited to suggest an alternative), is hardly the happiest choice. Ms Hamill was confused by the letter, especially since DCI McBurney gave his address as Portadown RUC Station, and is now concerned that Portadown RUC officers may actually be involved in the investigation, or will at least be kept informed of its progress.

Furthermore, Ms Hamill understands that none of the RUC officers who are the subject of her complaint has been suspended from duty. Given the very

serious nature of the allegations against them, this is somewhat surprising, and undermines Ms Hamill's faith in the investigation itself.

We should be grateful if you would confirm that no RUC officer from Portadown will play any part in the conduct of the ICPC's inquiry, and neither will Portadown RUC officers be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry.

Secondly, we should be grateful if you would let us know whether you have considered asking an external police force, rather than the RUC, to conduct the inquiry, as even if Portadown officers are excluded, the present arrangements do have the appearance of the RUC investigating itself, albeit under the ICPC's supervision. The standard letter sent by DCI McBurney has, unfortunately, reinforced that impression.

Thirdly, it would increase the family's confidence in the investigation if the police officers under investigation were to be suspended for its duration. Sadly, the family has been subjected to sectarian abuse since Robert died, and received a very unsatisfactory response from Portadown RUC when they sought their assistance while this abuse was actually taking place. The thought that any of those officers who allegedly stood by while Robert was attacked may be the ones responding to any request they may make for help should they suffer further abuse is an understandably uncomfortable one, both from the point of view of the families and in the eyes of impartial observers.

Your response to these points would be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,


Director.