

Government to bring forward amendments to Legacy Bill following months of engagement

Press release

The UK Government has announced its intention to bring forward amendments to legislation seeking to address the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.



In recent months, the Government has engaged extensively with stakeholders, including victims and survivors in Northern Ireland. The Government has now confirmed it will introduce amendments at Lords Committee Stage that seek to address many of the concerns raised.

The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, which has its Second Reading in the House of Lords today (Wednesday 23 November), seeks to deliver better outcomes for those most impacted by the Troubles, including victims, survivors and veterans, while helping society to look forward.

The Government amendments will:

- Confirm that the Independent Commission for Reconciliation & Information Recovery (ICRIR) established by the legislation will be able to conduct criminal investigations where it judges that to be appropriate.
- Ensure that individuals who knowingly or recklessly provide false information to the ICRIR can be prosecuted and have their immunity revoked.
- Disapply the Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998 for individuals who choose not to tell the Commission what they know and are then convicted of an offence so that they face a full, rather than reduced, sentence.
- Increase the fine for non-compliance with the Commission.
- Strengthen the Commission's independence by making clear that the Secretary of State should consult individuals before appointing the Chief Commissioner.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, said:

The UK Government understands how important addressing the legacy of the past is for Northern Ireland, and is determined to deliver better outcomes for those most impacted by the Troubles, including victims and survivors, as well as veterans.

I have been clear that the Government would consider changes to this Bill seriously. The changes announced today reflect the significant engagement that has taken place on the Bill, and seek to address concerns that have been raised by many stakeholders.

I also recognise that, even with these changes, this Bill will remain challenging for many, and that concerns will remain. The Government remains absolutely committed to constructive engagement with all interested parties on these concerns, and how they might be addressed, as the Bill continues its passage through Parliament.

He added: "We must also recognise that a perfect solution to such an intractable issue is not attainable, and work constructively towards the best possible solution that works for those most impacted by the Troubles and helps society to look forward.

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