



New Jersey's Fourth Congressional District

Chair of the House Africa, Global Health and Human Rights Subcommittee; Chair of the Helsinki Commission; Senior Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 8, 2011

Contact: Jeff Sagnip (202) 225-3765
<http://chrissmith.house.gov>

Upcoming meeting with Finucane family and U.K. PM, NI Secretary

Smith Urges British to Establish Independent Judicial Inquiry in 1989 Murder of Human Rights Lawyer

Smith: Finucane family's views must be taken into account

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-04), chairman of the House panel on international human rights and chairman of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), today called for the British government to honor its commitment to a lasting and just peace in Northern Ireland and launch a full, independent, public judicial inquiry into the 1989 murder of human rights lawyer Patrick Finucane.

Reports indicate British Prime Minister David Cameron and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Owen Paterson are set to meet Finucane's widow, children and other family members on Tuesday to discuss or announce plans for an investigation into the murder. While Smith expressed appreciation for the British government's renewed efforts in this long-unfulfilled commitment from the Good Friday accords and the subsequent Weston Park agreement, he urged America's closest ally, the British government, to use the meeting as an opportunity to consult the Finucanes and incorporate their concerns of fundamental human rights before a final decision is reached.

“In light of this upcoming meeting, we are hopeful that at this critical moment the British authorities do everything in their power to meet their commitment from the Weston Park Agreement 10 years ago and, in consultation with the family, make a final decision to launch a full, transparent, public judicial inquiry into who killed Patrick Finucane,” said Smith, who since the mid-1990s has chaired a dozen U.S. hearings on peace and justice in Northern Ireland.

“The Finucane family, which has come to Capitol Hill more than a half-dozen times to testify before members of Congress, has suffered for a long time and waited for a long time to see justice served. Only such an inquiry can accomplish that,” Smith said. “The Congress has held a dozen hearings on this and is prepared to hold a dozen more, if necessary. The British authorities should decide on a path that includes the interests of all parties in the inquiry, but most importantly has the support and confidence of the Finucane family. Ever since the tragic, senseless murder of this human rights lawyer, his family has sought nothing but the truth. A just and lasting peace must be predicated on the truth.”

Chairman Smith [wrote to Paterson in April](#), emphasizing the need for decisive action in the Finucane case based on the recommendations of Canadian Judge Peter Cory, who produced the independent Cory Report in December 2003 calling for an independent, public judicial investigation into the murder. He was joined by other key Members of the U.S. House of Representatives in the appeal.

The House of Representatives is on record regarding the tragic murder, calling on the British government to conduct a full, independent public judicial inquiry into the possibility of police collusion in the murder of Patrick Finucane, through the passage of several bills Smith authored including: H.Res. 128 which passed in the 106th Congress; H. Res. 740 which passed in the 109th Congress, and; a similar measure, H. Con. Res. 20 which passed during the 110th Congress. Such an inquiry is supported on a bipartisan basis on Capitol Hill, as well as by Republican and Democratic administrations.

In March, Smith, a leading American human rights lawmaker, chaired a Helsinki Commission hearing entitled “[Northern Ireland: Why Justice in Individual Cases Matters](#),” and separately met with Paterson.

###