

Rt Hon Hilary Benn  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
House of Commons  
London  
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*Issued via email: [bennh@parliament.uk](mailto:bennh@parliament.uk)*

**20 January 2026**

Dear Secretary of State,

As Commissioner for Victims and Survivors, we have been following the debates at Westminster very carefully and are concerned at the increasingly negative and at times the toxic nature of the debate. These concerns are echoed in the ongoing engagements we have with victims and survivors including those who have served in the armed forces.

From a Commission perspective, any framework and supporting legislation must place the needs, aspirations and hopes of all victims and survivors front and centre if we are to have any hope of building a reconciled society. As you will be aware from our meetings, the Joint Framework has been received with cautious optimism by victims and survivors as a “work in progress”.

However, victims and survivors are expressing an increasing sense of growing cynicism and despair as implementation hits the political realities here and in Westminster, and decades may be lost if the opportunity offered by the Joint Framework is lost.

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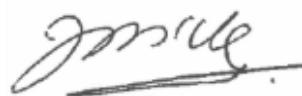
We would encourage you and other parliamentarians to continue to show courage and determination to deliver for victims and survivors. We note that your Government is facing opposition and challenges from a number of quarters which is healthy. It is essential, from our perspective, that the contributions reflect a range of views as victims and survivors including veterans are not a homogenous group, often silent and not always organised as part of powerful lobby groups.

The debate around legacy, finding the appropriate models, processes, safeguards, and funding mechanisms that is playing out, and will continue in the coming months, is important given the seriousness of the issues. Victims and survivors also wish to see systems and processes in place that are fair, transparent and Human Rights compliant whereby everyone is treated equally. After decades of missed opportunities and diminished hope, they want to see legislation that is victim centred, and when combined will build confidence across all communities now and in the coming decades.

I would ask that you to encourage colleagues across all parties to remember why this work is so important and not to allow the opportunity to be lost or crowded out, rather to move ahead now to make a significant contribution to building a better future for all.

We look forward to our continuing engagement and constructive debate.

Your Sincerely,



Joe McVey  
**Commissioner**

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