



Greece, Turkey reel from political fallout of snowstorm

## Texas man tries to smuggle migrants in flag-draped coffin



LONDONDERRY: Workers clean up the Bloody Sunday monument bearing the names of victims in the Bogside area in Londonderry (Derry) in Northern Ireland. Families mourning fathers and sons killed by British soldiers on 'Bloody Sunday' have long battled to prove their relatives' innocence and still hope to see justice served. —AFP

# 'Bloody Sunday' pain endures, 50 years on

## Northern Ireland commemorates one of the most painful episodes

LONDONDERRY: Fifty years after "Bloody Sunday", Northern Ireland this weekend commemorates one of the most painful episodes during more than three decades of violence between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists. "It's a major milestone in the journey we have travelled for all these years," said John Kelly, whose brother Michael was shot dead by British paratroopers during the January 30, 1972 rights march in Londonderry, or Derry as nationalists call it.

On Sunday, Kelly will march as he did with his brother half a century ago, before he was killed at the age of 17. Thirteen people died at the shooting, and one more afterwards. Kelly remembered his brother as "quiet, full of life". "He was a bit of a joker," he added, but said he respected his parents and had asked them for permission to join the civil rights demonstration on that fateful day.

The day's events - immortalized by Irish band U2 in their 1983 song "Sunday Bloody Sunday" - were one of the most dramatic episodes of the "Troubles" over British rule in Northern Ireland. On one side were nationalists in favor of reuniting Ireland and on the other unionists who wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom. The bloodletting claimed some 3,500 lives and largely ended in

1998 with the Good Friday peace deal.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday called "Bloody Sunday" a "tragic day in our history" and "one of the darkest days of the Troubles". Passions still simmer. Fifty years ago, the British army wrongly stated that paratroopers had first been fired upon by "terrorists" from the Irish Republican Army (IRA). It was not until an official inquiry concluded in 2010 that the truth emerged: the demonstrators were unarmed and some were shot in the back, or while on the ground, or while waving white handkerchiefs.

### 'Outright lies'

Kate Nash's brother, William, was shot dead aged 19 on "Bloody Sunday". "I'm so proud that we got here," she said, adding that the tragedy was "covered up, lies, distortions, delays, outright lies". Former Catholic priest Denis Bradley, who witnessed the bloodshed and gave prayers for the dying, said the killings sent many

young Catholics into the arms of the IRA.

One of them was Tony Doherty, who was just nine when his father was killed by a British paratrooper's bullet in his back. "The massacre was completely unjustifiable, the judicial process afterwards added travesty to tragedy, and had a long term effect on people like myself growing up in Derry at the time," he said. The angry youth ended up planting a bomb at the age of 18. The device did not explode, but Doherty was sent to prison from 1981-85. "It could have been much worse," he said. "People could have been killed or injured."

### New riots

In recent months, the fallout from the UK's departure from the European Union has underlined the fragility of the delicate balance created by the 1998 peace deal. Port checks introduced to avoid creating a "hard" border between Northern Ireland and Ireland have upset unionists who see them as a threat to the province's sta-

tus within the UK.

Anger spilled over into violence in April last year as hardcore unionists pelted police and nationalists with firebombs over several nights in the worst unrest seen in years. Parachute Regiment flags have recently been spotted in loyalist areas of Londonderry, local nationalist MP Colum Eastwood told the UK parliament on Wednesday. Elections for the Northern Ireland assembly in May are being closely watched for a tip in the fragile political balance in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein, which was once the political wing of the IRA, is heading for a possible victory over the once dominant unionists.

In the Bogside neighborhood where "Bloody Sunday" took place, murals on every street corner recall the painful past that residents also recount daily to visitors. At the Free Derry Museum, John Kelly shows some teenage visitors a 7.62 mm caliber bullet like the one that killed his brother. Outside, Tony Doherty's brother Paul stands on the spot where their father was killed, recounting the events to visitors - "the real story from the people who were directly affected by this massacre". Relatives of those who died still dream of a peaceful and united Ireland. "I hope to see it," said Kelly. "This island's too small to be actually partitioned." —AFP

## 'Bloody Sunday': A long battle for truth and justice

LONDONDERRY: Families mourning fathers and sons killed by British soldiers on "Bloody Sunday" have long battled to prove their relatives' innocence and still hope to see justice served. After paratroopers opened fire on protesters on January 30, 1972, in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, it took 38 years for the 13 civilians shot dead to be recognized as innocent.

An initial report exonerated the soldiers, saying the protesters had been infiltrated by Irish Republican Army (IRA) paramilitaries. Victims' relatives derided the report by English judge John Widgery, published just three months after the killings. John Kelly, whose brother Michael was killed, slammed the inquiry as "set up by the British government to tell lies about our people".

He launched a campaign for a new investigation, which finally took place in 1998. The 12-year investigation, costing nearly £200 million (\$420 million at current rates), was led by another senior judge, Mark Saville, and was the longest and most costly in British history. It established that the victims were not armed and that the armed forces had given a misleading account of the events. The prime minister of the time, David Cameron, issued an official apology for the killings, calling them "both unjustified and unjustifiable".

### Halted prosecutions

The Saville report heavily criticized Lieutenant Colonel Derek Wilford, the commander of the troops involved, for sending soldiers into the area and disobeying orders. He rejected the report's conclusions. "We thought in fact that we were under attack. And we will remain convinced of that, actually, until the end of our days," he told the BBC in an interview in 2019.

Earlier that year, the Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland charged a British ex-paratrooper known only as Soldier F with the murder of two people on "Bloody Sunday" and



DERRY: In this file photo, a British soldier drags a Catholic protester during the 'Bloody Sunday' killings when British paratroopers shot dead 13 Catholics civil rights marchers in Londonderry. —AFP

the attempted murder of four others. But in July 2021, it announced it was to halt the prosecution. It also opted not to prosecute another former soldier, known as Soldier B, for the murder of a 15-year-old boy who was killed with two bullets in the head in July 1972, also in Londonderry, which is known to nationalists as Derry.

The decision angered victims' families and Michael McKinney, whose brother William was shot in the back, is seeking a judicial review of the Soldier F case. A Belfast court in May 2021 acquitted two former soldiers of murdering an IRA paramilitary, Joe McCann. The British government last year presented a controversial bill to parliament to prevent "vexatious" criminal prosecutions over alleged past crimes in the three-decade "Troubles" over British rule in Northern Ireland.

Critics condemned it as an effective amnesty for both soldiers and ex-paramilitaries. Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis acknowledged that some would find such a move hard but called it "the best way to help Northern Ireland move further along the road to reconciliation". Kate Nash, whose brother William Nash was killed on "Bloody Sunday", has condemned the call to halt prosecutions, saying a country "has no right to call itself a democracy after putting anybody above the law". —AFP

## Violence between Catholic nationalists, Protestant unionists



## 30 years of killing: Northern Ireland's 'Troubles'

LONDONDERRY: Northern Ireland was torn apart by three decades of violence between nationalist and unionist communities that ended with the Good Friday Agreement signed 23 years ago. The province's majority Protestant unionists favored continued British rule. Catholic republicans wanted equal rights and reunification with the rest of Ireland. Here is an overview of "The Troubles" during which more than 3,500 people were killed.

### Trouble starts

Violence erupts in 1968 when police use force against a peaceful Catholic civil rights demonstration in Londonderry demanding an end to discrimination in voting, jobs and housing. The situation degenerates as Catholic meetings and demonstrations end in clashes with the police and Protestants. In August 1969 as sectarian violence grips the province, British troops are deployed.

### IRA steps in

In 1970 a Catholic guerrilla group, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), begins a campaign of bombings and shootings against the troops. Unionist paramilitary groups respond, mostly by killing Catholics, further driving a wedge between the communities. Violence explodes after January 1972 when 13 people are killed on "Bloody Sunday" after British soldiers open fire on a peaceful Catholic civil rights march in Londonderry. One protester dies later.

### Direct rule

London suspends the Northern Ireland provincial government three months later, leading to decades of direct rule from the British capital. In 1974 the IRA extends the bombing campaign to Britain with attacks on pubs in Guildford, Woolwich and Birmingham that kill about 30 people in all. It also assassinates key British establishment figures including Queen Elizabeth II's cousin Lord Louis Mountbatten in rural northwest Ireland in 1979. On the same day 18 British soldiers are killed in an IRA ambush at Warrenpoint in Northern Ireland.

### Hunger strikes, bombs

A turning point comes in 1981 when IRA inmate Bobby



LONDONDERRY: Photo shows a mural entitled 'Bloody Sunday Commemoration' made by the Bogside Artists in the Bogside area of Londonderry (Derry) in Northern Ireland. —AFP

Sands and nine comrades die on hunger strike at Maze Prison demanding political prisoner status. Their deaths draw global sympathy for the republican cause. The following year the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein wins its first seats in parliament. A year after Gerry Adams is elected party chief. The IRA continues to strike in England, with prime minister Margaret Thatcher narrowly escaping death in a bomb attack on the Grand Hotel in Brighton during the 1984 Conservative party conference in which five people die. Seven years later they attempt to assassinate her successor, John Major, in a mortar attack on 10 Downing Street. In 1992 and 1993 two massive bombings kill four people and cause major damage in the City of London financial hub.

### Peace initiatives

An attempt by Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath to establish a power-sharing executive founders in 1973 after a unionist general strike. Thatcher signs an Anglo-Irish accord in 1985, acknowledging Dublin's say in Northern Ireland's affairs. Behind-the-scenes talks lead to an IRA ceasefire in 1994, which breaks down as negotiations stall.

### Good Friday breakthrough

In July 1997, after Tony Blair becomes Labor prime minister, Sinn Fein gets a place at the negotiating table after the IRA declares a new ceasefire. The Good Friday Agreement is signed on April 10, 1998 between London, Dublin and the main Northern Ireland political parties. It leads to a new semi-autonomous Northern Ireland with a power-sharing government between Protestants and Catholics. —AFP