

Lawyer's fury at RUC over Duffy arrest

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THE MAIN prosecution witness against a Lurgan man charged with murdering two policemen last week has been taken into protective custody, residents claimed last night.

And *the Irish News* has spoken to a second witness who claims to have been just 14 inches from the two IRA men who killed Constable Roland Graham and Reserve Constable David Johnson at Church Walk in the town last week.

A major human rights row is set to break out over the charging of Colin Duffy with the double murder just nine months after he was freed from prison after his successful appeal against a conviction for killing a former UDR man.

Friends of Mr Duffy who carried out a lengthy campaign for his release now fear there is a danger of history repeating itself.

The 29-year-old from Drumnamoe Gardens, whose wife is expecting their second child, spent three and a half years in prison before the appeal court overturned his life sentence for the murder of John Lyness in June 1993.

Much of the original identification evidence was discredited after Crown witness Lindsay Robb was convicted of being a UVF gunman. Former taoiseach Albert Reynolds and campaigning TD Eamonn O Cuiv attended Mr Duffy's appeal in September last year.

Residents in the Armagh town last

'Key witness in protective custody'

night claimed that at around 6pm on Monday, a lorry arrived at the home of the prosecution witness and her furniture was removed.

Mr Duffy's solicitor, Rosemary Nelson, said: "I can confirm that it was only after this time that any suggestion of eyewitness evidence was put to my client. The detective sergeant who gave evidence in court refused to divulge whether or not a statement had been made by the identifying witness."

A 36-year-old Lurgan man spoke to *the Irish News* yesterday just minutes after making a statement to RUC officers investigating the double killing. The man, who asked for his name to be withheld, said he knew Colin Duffy "to see" but was not a friend.

"I heard the shots and saw the two men running towards me. They came very close and both were wearing masks, like something out of a fancy dress shop. One was just about 14 inches from me when he told me to get out of the way. They ran to a car and drove off.

"To me, they seemed to be in drag. There is no way anyone could recognise those men. Colin Duffy is taller than me, about six-foot and slim. The two men who passed me were

short and broad, maybe five foot-six and five foot-eight," he said.

Mrs Nelson revealed that she has lodged two complaints with the RUC over what she has termed "irregularities in police interviewing tactics" and the alleged denial of legal access to her client while he was held in Gough Barracks, Armagh.

It is understood that Mrs Nelson, who had hoped to hand over Colin Duffy's alibi evidence while he was being charged, has protested at her alleged exclusion.

Last September, after serving more than three years in prison, the appeal court cleared Colin Duffy of the murder of former UDR soldier John Lyness.

The Committee on the Administration of Justice was in the campaign which secured his release and last night a spokesman expressed concern at the details of the latest charges against Mr Duffy.

"We were involved in a previous campaign to get Colin Duffy released and we are concerned that this appears to be a similar case," he said.

Jean Forest, director of US Voice For Human Rights in Northern Ireland extended her sympathy to the families of murdered RUC constables Johnston and Graham. She also expressed concern at the nature of Colin Duffy's arrest and at "the unfortunate fact that Mr Duffy's solicitor was denied accessibility to being present at the time Mr Duffy was charged".

A third man was arrested yesterday and was being questioned about the murders last night, an RUC spokesman revealed.