

## Group of solicitors complain over RUC

From Helen Shaw,  
in Belfast

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A GROUP of 14 solicitors in the North have accused the RUC of regularly harassing lawyers acting on behalf of clients being detained at interrogation centres in Derry, Armagh and Castlereagh.

In a statement yesterday the solicitors said they wished to highlight the problem in the light of the recent murder of a Catholic man, Mr Dermott Hackett, who complained of regular police harassment over the past year. They said lawyers acting for detainees were given similar treatment by the RUC.

"Constantly unfortunate people detained in those police barracks who are isolated and helpless are abused by RUC detectives when they ask for their solicitors. The solicitors are referred to as "IRA men", "murderers and terrorists" the implications being that the person who asked for one of them is thereby admitting his role as a terrorist."

The 14 solicitors: Mr Paddy Fahy (Omagh), Mr Paul Haughey (Dungannon), Mr Francis Rafferty (Dungannon), Mr John Fahy (Strabane), Mr Brendan Kearney (Derry), Mr William Hasson (Derry), Mr Dennis Mullian (Derry), Mr Oliver Kelly (Derry and Belfast), Mr Pat Finucane (Belfast), Mr Ciaran Steel (Belfast), Mr Kevin Agnew (Maghera), Mr Frank McManus (Enniskillen), Mr Eugene Corrigan (Enniskillen) and Mr Kevin Delaney (Belfast), are all known to accept political and "terrorist-type" cases.

They maintain that their willingness to defend such cases is resented by the security forces who smear them as "IRA men" and tell people asking for them that it confirms their guilt. Mr Paddy Fahy said the RUC regularly obstructed a defendant's right to have access to a solicitor and said false information was often given out about the detained person. He said recently when a young Protestant man asked for him he was told by the RUC: "What, are you asking for a Provo?" and they gave him the name of another solicitor.

"We are not primarily concerned about the effect of this harassment on us but on the people being held in these centres," he told *The Irish Times*. "Their aim is to make these people as isolated as possible and discourage lawyers from taking up their defence."