

NIO 24



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Mr Adam Ingram MP
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5th March 98

Dear Sir,

We are writing in connection with Rosemary Nelson, Solicitor. Ms Nelson, as you may be aware, practises law in Lurgan, Co. Armagh. For at least a year Ms Nelson has been alleging that she has been subject to harassment and abuse at the hands of the police. She also claims that she has been subject to a number of death threats, some of which have been telephoned to her office, and others which reportedly have been made by police officers to her clients while in detention. Ms Nelson's allegations are of course not unique. Credible evidence has existed for many years of systematic and ongoing intimidation stretching back over ten years. Indeed this and the murder of Patrick Finucane have been the subject of a number of reports published by reputable international human rights groups. (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *To Serve Without Favor* 1997 and *Human Rights in Northern Ireland*, 1991; Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *At the Crossroads: Human Rights and the Northern Ireland Peace Process*, 1996 and *Human Rights and Legal Defense in Northern Ireland*, 1993; Amnesty International, *United Kingdom Human Rights Concerns* [London: AI, June 1991]). Such was his concern at ongoing reports of police harassment of defence lawyers that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers visited Northern Ireland in October last year to investigate the matter. His report will soon be published. One of the cases he looked into was that of Rosemary Nelson.

Ms Nelson and a number of her clients have lodged complaints against the police which are being dealt with through the Independent Commission for Police Complaints. These involve death threats and allegations that Ms Nelson is involved in paramilitary activity. Ms Nelson also claims that she was physically assaulted by members of the police on Garvaghy Road in July.

Ms Nelson recently contacted this office to express her concern that further death threats and allegations of involvement with a paramilitary group were made to a clients of hers detained in Castlereagh last week. We have since interviewed the client in question, Mr Gary Marshall. He was arrested on Saturday 21st February and held for over six days, finally being released on Friday 27th February. No adverse mention was made of his solicitor until the first interview on the morning of Friday 27th. While he is unable to identify the detectives who made the comments by name,