



***Young people, not born at the time of the disaster, reflect at the Hillsborough Memorial at Liverpool's Anfield ground in September 2012 on the eve of the publication of the review chaired by Bishop James Jones***

## **NEWS FOCUS - Church response to the Hillsborough disaster verdicts**

***Comments by the C of E Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd Paul Bayes and Alexander Lucie-Smith, a Catholic priest, doctor of moral theology and consulting editor of The Catholic Herald. The former Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd James Jones, will provide a report to the British government detailing the experiences of the families of those killed in the Hillsborough disaster.***

## **Bishop of Liverpool: Hillsborough is a story of "loss grief and pain"**

**The Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd Paul Bayes, has spoken of the “loss, grief and pain” felt by the victims of the Hillsborough disaster as a jury ruled that the 96 Liverpool FC fans who were killed in a crush at the FA Cup semi-final match against Nottingham Forest in April 1989 were unlawfully killed.**

This week’s verdicts come at the end of a fresh inquest that was ordered after an independent panel, chaired by the former Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd James Jones, discovered evidence that 41 of the 96 fans could have survived if they had received better medical treatment; and that

some 164 police statements had been significantly amended before they were submitted to the original inquests and inquiry.

The disaster occurred when police opened a gate to speed up entrance into the ground; with the result that an increasing number of fans being were sent into already overcrowded fenced pens. The families of the victims have fought for 27 years for justice after the police, politicians and media conspired to cover up the cause of the tragedy and deflect blame onto the fans.

The verdicts say that the fans were not responsible for the disaster. Instead, it says that there were failings by the police and ambulance service, by Sheffield Wednesday, the owners of the Hillsborough Ground, and by the Football Association and the ground's engineers.

The inquests – the longest in British legal history – heard that there were two other crushing incidents in the years leading up to the Hillsborough disaster and that the ground did not have a safety certificate.

“We have waited a long time for these determinations, and today was bound to be a difficult day,” the current Bishop of Liverpool,

Paul Bayes, said. “It brings raw emotions and painful memories to the surface once again, for the families and for our city region.

“But there is also real comfort today, because the accusations at the time that Liverpool’s fans contributed to this tragedy have finally been proven to be false.

“The steady journey continues. The families have always said that they seek truth and justice, and the inquests have worked longer than any in British legal history to uncover the truth. Now justice must follow.”

Bishop Bayes continued: “I pay tribute to those whose courage and tenacity has never wavered over the years. In particular, I honour my predecessor Bishop James Jones and the work he did with the Independent Panel which did so much to get us to this point.

“Now we move forward once again on this long journey to justice. Together with my colleagues from all the churches, I commit myself to support those who hurt, help those who grieve and show God’s love and compassion for all.

“As we take in this week’s news and consider our reactions, let us not lose sight of what is

most important. At the heart of this story are the 96 people who lost their lives and countless more who have had their lives and their hearts broken.

“We honour the families and those who have supported them over the years. We honour those who have stood for truth and justice. Ours is a story of loss, grief and pain. This story continues because that pain continues, but we will walk forward with hope in our hearts. And as Christians we believe that the God of all love and strength will walk alongside us into the future.”

Last week, in a statement to mark the 27th anniversary of the disaster, Bishop Bayes said: Like anyone else who lives their life in this city and region, I have grown to understand the impact of the Hillsborough tragedy on us all, and the importance of keeping its memory alive. We remember the 96 with pride, and we honour their memory by seeking justice.

“I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues from denominations and faiths as we mark the anniversary this year, and as we await the outcomes of the inquiry. I am particularly honoured to stand with my predecessor Bishop James Jones, who as chair

of the Independent Panel did so much to open the doors to the justice and truth we seek.

“I continue to pray for God’s comfort and healing to touch the families and all those affected in our wider community.”

## **Dishonest police, a broken legal system and a callous press: the Hillsborough verdicts bring shame on Britain**

**Coverage of the recent Hillsborough verdicts (all news outlets, everywhere, no links necessary) has aroused intense feelings and reactions in Liverpool; but it seems to me that while Hillsborough is of great concern to people in Liverpool, it ought to be so to the rest of us as well - Alexander Lucie-Smith writes in the Catholic Herald**

The questions raised should concern us all. First of all, why did it take 27 years for us to reach this verdict? Justice delayed, we all know, is justice denied: and for those survivors of the Hillsborough disaster who did not live to see this day, justice has certainly been denied. Would

this have been the case if the disaster had happened at a different sporting occasion, such as Wimbledon, Henley or Ascot? Or had happened at a cricket match? One is left with the uncomfortable realisation that the administration of justice in Britain is not even handed.

If justice is not even handed, neither has been the response of many of those in power, or some sections of the press. The attempt to blame the victims is shocking. It now appears that at least one newspaper published a completely fabricated story about the events at Hillsborough and the behaviour of the fans on that terrible afternoon. Can we ever trust such newspapers again?

Even more worrying is the revelation that a senior police officer lied, and kept on lying for quarter of a century. This is flabbergasting. When someone lies to us, it usually entails a dramatic loss of trust in that person. How can we ever trust the police again? Their reputation has been tarnished of late by a series of follies. This latest revelation leads to inescapable conclusion that Britain's police forces need to take urgent steps to rebuild public confidence in them. This is extremely serious: untrustworthy police forces

are a hallmark of Third World countries, places where the rule of law does not exist.

Britain was once justly proud of its police and of the way it observed the rule of law. Hillsborough should convince us that we cannot take anything for granted any more. Our police are far from perfect, our judicial system seems broken, and people from the perceived wrong side of tracks have to wait a generation to be vindicated in the courts. It's not good enough.

Given that this is a Catholic magazine, it is useful to remind ourselves of the principles of Catholic social teaching, which could act as a useful corrective in this case.

First of all, all are called to participate in national life: there are no 'them' and 'us', no people on the wrong side of the tracks, indeed no tracks. We should show solidarity with each other, which is based on the realisation that what affects one section of the community affects us all.

Secondly, we should all adhere to the common good: a justice system that take so long, and newspapers that defame the dead and the suffering, do not contribute to the common good, rather they have a morally corrosive effect



on national life. As someone once said: we are all in this together. If only that were so. We need to change, and to make that pious wish a reality.

## **Bishop James Jones to report on Hillsborough families' experience**



***The former Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, will report on the experience of the families of those killed in the Hillsborough Disaster***

The former Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd James Jones, will provide a report to the British government detailing the experiences of the families of those killed in the Hillsborough

disaster, the UK's Home Secretary told MPs this afternoon.

In a statement in the House of Commons, following yesterday's historic [unlawful killing inquest verdicts](#), Home Secretary Theresa May paid tribute to Bishop James Jones' work as chair of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, saying that their work had led to the new inquest – the longest in British legal history – and two separate criminal investigations: one looking at the events of the disaster itself; and another looking at the subsequent police cover-up and altering of witness statements.

The two investigations are ongoing. It is expected that files will be sent to prosecutors by the end of this year with a decision on any prosecutions within a few months after that.

Speaking to MPs, Ms May said that Bishop James Jones will continue to chair the “family forums” that have been established to help the family groups engage in a structured way with the two investigations and the Crown Prosecution Service.

“In addition, I am keen that we understand and learn from the families' experiences,” Ms May said. “I have therefore asked Bishop James – who is my adviser on Hillsborough – to write a

report which draws on these experiences. This report will be published in due course, to ensure that the full perspective of those most affected by the Hillsborough disaster is not lost.

“I would also like to express my thanks to Bishop James again for his invaluable advice over the years. There is further work to be done so I have asked Bishop James to remain as my adviser and I am pleased to say he has agreed to do so.”

Welcoming Bishop James Jones’ new role, the Opposition spokesman Andy Burnham, who established the Independent Panel when he was in government in January 2010, said that he had attended several days of the new inquest.

“I saw how hard it was on the families: trapped for two years in a temporary courtroom; told to show no emotion as police lawyers smeared the dead and those who survived – beyond cruel. “I welcome Bishop James’s new role in explaining just how cruel this was to the House [of Commons] and to the country.”

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