

Northern Ireland Troubles: Controversy Legacy Bill passes through Commons

The government's controversial Legacy Bill has passed after a vote in Westminster, despite widespread opposition in Northern Ireland. A bid by the House of Lords to amend the bill was voted down by 288 to 205. The bill ends new Troubles-era cases and inquests and offers conditional amnesty to those accused of killings.

5 **The Irish government is considering legal action against the UK over the bill which the Democratic Unionist Party said was "abhorrent".**

The bill will return to the Lords next week before going for royal assent.

It has been widely opposed by victims groups and all of Northern Ireland's political parties.

The government has said the legislation, which applies to all former members of the security forces and ex-paramilitaries, is an attempt to draw a line under the events of the past.

10 Veterans groups - such as the Northern Ireland Veterans Movement - widely support the bill.

On Tuesday, the Lords backed an amendment to give victims' families a greater say in granting immunity from prosecution to offenders.

But the Conservative majority in the House of Commons rejected that on Wednesday, clearing the path for the legislation to be sent for royal assent.

15 What has the reaction been?

Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris told the House of Commons it was incumbent on the government to find a process that "can deliver positive outcomes for as many of those directly affected by the Troubles as possible".

Taoiseach (Irish prime minister) Leo Varadkar said it was "the wrong way to go about dealing with legacy issues in Northern Ireland".

20 "There aren't many things that all of the five main parties in Northern Ireland agree on but they all agreed this is wrong, and this is not victim-centred and not human-rights proofed," Mr Varadkar told reporters in County Wicklow.

DUP assembly member Emma Little-Pengelly said the "abhorrent" passage of the bill represents a "dark day for innocent victims of the Troubles".

25 SDLP leader Colum Eastwood said he was "angry and ashamed" at the outcome of the vote and called on the Irish government to intervene.

Speaking before the debate, Sinn Féin MP John Finucane described the bill as devastating for families, adding it would unilaterally close the door on them getting truth and justice.

Grainne Teggart, of Amnesty International UK, said it was a "dark day for justice" and that the law only absolves "those responsible for conflict-related abuses - and, shamefully, all under the guise of reconciliation".

30 More than 1,000 killings from the Troubles have never been solved.

It has been brought into the main news headlines in recent years as a soldier has been in court charged with murdering two people in 1972. The man, known only as Soldier F, is accused of killing the men during what became known as Bloody Sunday, when the Army's Parachute Regiment opened fire on a civil rights march in Derry.