

Kirk demands justice for wronged policewoman facing legal bill

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THE Church of Scotland is to campaign for justice on behalf of a former policewoman who was cleared of lying on oath during a trial.

The General Assembly agreed to call on the Scottish Executive to ensure that Shirley McKie is treated justly.

Ms McKie was wrongly accused of perjury for maintaining that a fingerprint found at a murder scene was not hers.

She was cleared of lying on oath at the murder trial, but still faces having to pay legal expenses.

Her family have previously called for a public inquiry.

Findlay Turner, who proposed the motion to the Assembly, urged the Commissioners to "express their deep concern over the operation of our system of justice revealed by the case of former Detective Constable Shirley McKie".

"Shirley was accused of perjury and a young man spent time in prison for a murder he did not commit," he said.

"He might still have been there if Shirley McKie had not stood up. One might expect that the gratitude of society is due.

"But no. Some seven years after the event, she has lost her job, she had to fight to preserve her pension, she is still severely traumatised and unable to work, and has been placed in the position of having to sue for compensation."

He said "all sorts of obstacles" were still being put in Ms McKie's path, with the "unfortunate indignity being perpetrated on our behalf" of Strathclyde Police trying to recover legal costs from a young woman who "simply told the truth".

He added: "The trouble here is that for many of us, justice has not been seen to be done."

Moderator Dr Alison Elliot told the Assembly that she hoped Ms McKie's family would "feel encouraged by the concern that the Assembly has shown".

Earlier this week, Iain McKie, Ms McKie's father, said he would relish the chance to discuss the case with Jack McConnell, the First Minister.

"Why could he not do what he is supposed to do as First Minister of this country and stand up and do something about this instead of hiding behind the civil service?" he said.

"It is time he stopped and looked at this thing and what it is doing for justice in Scotland.

"It seems a strange democracy that we cannot debate in our Parliament issues like this and we have got to go to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. An inquiry is long overdue."

Mike Russell, the former MSP who has campaigned for Ms McKie, said: "It points to the

nonsense of the position that the matter could not be debated in Parliament, which I still think was wrong. It shows that concern is being shown right across the spectrum in Scotland at this continuing injustice."

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