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Family critical of search for missing Martin

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Please help me to find my lost son

By Debra Douglas

27 January 2006

The distraught mother of missing Co Down man Martin Kelly last night spoke of her hours of hell when she thought a body found in the area close to where he disappeared was that of her beloved son.

Martin (21), from Holywood, went missing after a night out with friends at Pat's Bar in Garmoyle Street in the docks area of Belfast on New Year's Day. His family believe he fell into the water.

Last Monday, a body was found at a landfill site close to the area where Martin was last seen and his family claim they were told by police they were "99% sure" it was him.

His heartbroken mother Karen said she was devastated when they were told only hours later that this was not the case.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph last night, she said: "If there is a place worse than hell, I was in it at that point, it was heartbreaking.

"On the day the body was found, we were actually up in the area thanking the guys on the Ken Vickers vessel for their help when it came through that a body had been found.

"We went over and sat in a little café then a police officer came down and told me they were 99% sure it was Martin.

"I asked him to put a blanket over him to keep him warm and asked if I could go and see him but I was told I couldn't as it was a crime scene.

"We had actually come home and we were arranging his funeral when we got a call to say it wasn't Martin - some other poor family were going through the same ordeal as us," she said.

Mrs Kelly and the rest of her family have been critical of the police response to Martin's disappearance, arguing that they could do more to help in the search.

Earlier this week, they hit out at the PSNI for not sending police divers into the Lough to look for him often enough.

But yesterday, they met with the police to discuss the situation and have been reassured more resources will be deployed this weekend at a search organised by the Kelly family.

Mrs Kelly said: "I feel like I have died and I'm in hell, all I want is Martin brought home."

A police spokesman said: "It is difficult to imagine what the Kelly family are going through following Martin's disappearance.

"We have carried out searches on the land, we have deployed air support and on one occasion, we have deployed the diving team.

"The reality is we just do not know where Martin is and have no evidence to confirm that he is actually in this large and difficult stretch of water."

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