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## **MANSFIELD CALLS FOR PUBLIC ENQUIRY INTO RELEASE OF LOCKERBIE BOMBER**

Radical QC Michael Mansfield has called for a public judicial enquiry into the Lockerbie case and the release of Abdelbaset al-Megrahi asking "What is the point of having a legal system if politicians are going to walk outside it?"

Speaking on the last day of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Mansfield said that the 2005 Public Enquiries Act had been deliberately used by the government to stifle investigation, possibly because the Hutton enquiry had got "too close for comfort", as far as it was concerned. He thought it unlikely that the important questions – what happened, why and who is responsible – were going to be answered in the forthcoming debate at Holyrood.

Mansfield, who has been involved with some of the highest profile cases in recent years, including the Marchioness disaster, The Birmingham Six and more recently Jean Charles de Menezes, spoke of Lockerbie as 'the case of the century' and said that it was up to the court to decide whether a conviction was safe and substantive not a politician and the criteria for compassionate release needed to be carefully examined. He believes there are a range of questions that need to be publicly and clearly answered and called for transparency and honesty.

He had serious questions about the substance of the case, not least the identification of al-Megrahi by the Maltese shopkeeper, Tony Gauci, saying that there were substantial discrepancies in the descriptions he gave the court. Mansfield was particularly concerned with the fact that that Gauci picked out al-Megrahi from an identity parade ten years after he sold the clothes which allegedly ended up in the suitcase where the bomb was placed in the plane and is quoted in court transcripts as saying "I am not an expert in age, height and build."

"What else is there?" asked Mansfield. "Questions need to be answered. How many times did he see photos of al-Megrahi in those ten years, and how much money was he paid?" He called for corroboration in this case, saying the Government has undermined due process and made comparisons with the Stephen Lawrence case in which he was also involved. "We don't have accountability in our democracy. If voting made a difference, they'd make it illegal."

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When asked about the cost of public enquiries, particularly the Saville enquiry into Bloody Sunday, Mansfield said "Justice doesn't come cheap" and the cost should not be an excuse to avoid giving the victims and the families of the victims answers.

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