



GRISLY: Attack on funeral

Hezbollah tighten grip on Beirut

BY KHALAD OWEIS

LEBANON'S Iranian-backed Shi'ite movement Hezbollah tightened its control of the capital Beirut yesterday in a show of force after it routed gunmen loyal to the Western-backed government.

Hezbollah's successes in three days of fighting has left the government of Fouad Siniora reeling and made clear that a more powerful Hezbollah is now calling the shots in Lebanon after a 17-month power struggle with the government.

In further violence yesterday, at least four gunmen died in clashes to the east of Beirut and in north Lebanon, while two people were killed in the capital when shots were fired at the funeral of a government supporter.

Deaths

The killings raised the casualty toll to 24 dead and at least 55 wounded since the fighting began.

The United States said it was talking with other powers about taking measures against "those responsible for the violence".

On the streets of Beirut, fighters from the Iranian- and Syrian-backed group continued to man checkpoints on main thoroughfares, although in smaller numbers than a day earlier.

Traffic was thin as many residents stayed at home and Beirut's international airport remained closed.

A few shops reopened after the army deployed in several areas but did not interfere with Hezbollah guerrillas, who in turn stayed away from main government installations.

LIVING ON A KNIFE EDGE

A MAN has had a miracle survival after performing a tracheotomy with a steak knife on himself.

Steve Wilder woke up just after midnight and couldn't breathe because his air passage had swollen shut.

"It just blocked all the way and I just got up and I panicked," said 55-year-old Wilder. "I got a knife and located it and pushed in and blood went gush."

Experts said that it was a miracle that Wilder was successful because surgeons train for years to do what took him only moments.

ANOTHER SUNDAY WORLD EXCLUSIVE



BASE: St. Marys Church, Knockbridge, Co. Louth

Priest stays quiet about missing cash

BY JIM GALLAGHER

THE controversial priest who has raised millions of euro for fake visionary Christina Gallagher refused to reveal this week where all the money had gone.

The Sunday World visited Fr Gerard McGinnity in his parish in Knockbridge, Co Louth, to find out why he had been raising huge amounts of cash all over the country – some of the cheques signed to his own name.

The under-fire cleric refused to say a word when he stepped out of St Mary's Church after saying mass.

Instead the grim-faced priest rushed to get in his 07-registered Toyota Corolla – complete with darkened windows – and drove away.

Conned

We wanted to ask him why he had conned elderly couple Michael and Betty Morrissey out of their €150,000 life-savings over a ten year period leaving them with little to live on.

As we revealed last week, the terrified Co. Waterford couple were threatened with eternal damnation if they did not hand over the cash.

One 2004 cheque for €40,000 was supposedly to help buy "visionary" Christina Gallagher a new home because she could not afford the luxury house she was living in at the time outside Newport.

The Sunday World revealed in February that Gallagher still owns that €1 million property she "couldn't afford" despite collecting money from followers.

We have also revealed how Gallagher owns numerous other fabulous properties and lives in a magnificent mansion on a millionaires' row on a private estate in Malahide, North Co Dublin.

While she lives the life of a pop star – Ronan Keating and Westlife's Nicky Byrne are neighbours – many of her followers have been left struggling.

Michael Morrissey (79) and wife Betty (69) cannot afford to fix their own central heating system after being brainwashed into giving away their money.

As the Sunday World revealed last week, they were put under massive psychological pressure to find the cash, even



SPELL: Fr McGinnity with Christina



REVEALED: Last week's Sunday World

VOW OF SILENCE



LUXURY: Gallaher's opulent home

though they could not afford it.

A year after being pressured for €40,000 – which McGinnity wanted in his own name – they were hit again for €50,000. This time the cheque was to go to John Rooney, one of Gallagher's main American fundraisers.

We wanted to ask McGinnity this week why he was collecting up to €1.8 million for Rooney around the same time as the American was buying the astonishing

home where Gallagher now lives.

McGinnity has already been called in by Cardinal Sean Brady and quizzed about his role in the House of Prayer, which has no Church approval.

As we also pointed out last week, he blatantly lied to his superior telling him he was not involved in fundraising.

Demanding

Now former House of Prayer followers are demanding that McGinnity be banned from preaching at the controversial House of Prayer – founded by Gallagher in 1993 – which is more than 100 miles away from his own parish and diocese.

One Church insider said that if Cardinal Brady did not act then the Archbishop of Tuam, Michael Neary, might ban the priest from his archdiocese.

Many former followers claim they only supported the House of Prayer because of McGinnity's presence.

"He gave the place credibility as he

used to be regarded as a very spiritual man," said one former believer.

"However, he seems to have lost the plot in recent years. All he ever does is talk about Gallagher and he seems to have fallen completely under her spell.

"He even began dying his hair after Christina encouraged him to do so. He is grey but you see him now and his hair is a sandy colour."

McGinnity in his regular Saturday afternoon sermons at the House of Prayer has attacked anyone who criticises Gallagher – including this reporter – as "an agent of the devil".

Cult

This is classic cult behaviour, according to experts.

Three weeks ago he reported that Our Lady had appeared to Gallagher and told her the attacks on her were over – she obviously misheard the message.

Two weeks ago he was so rattled believing there was a reporter in the crowd that he had to sit down to give his sermon for the first time and cut it short. A "miracle" that had been promised for that day did not happen.

One woman with a tape recorder was hassled by security guards with walkie-talkies and has now made a complaint to the local gardai. She has also written to McGinnity complaining about the appalling way she was treated.

One witness said: "For the first time McGinnity said that he might have received 'one or two cheques' but they were always lodged in the correct accounts. He was covering himself because he had said before the cheques with his name on them were forgeries."

The witness said Gallagher never appeared that afternoon although she was believed to be around because her bodyguard Tony Fitzpatrick was there.

"It was supposed to be their big day, the end of a long novena stretching back months. A miracle was also due to happen and she doesn't even bother to turn up. McGinnity covered for her by saying, 'Christina is so so sick today'."

The man said there were only 200 followers at the big event when in the old days there could have been 2,000.

"There were seven or eight stewards and one was checking cars while a woman was taking photos of number plates. There was complete paranoia," said the man.

"If Our Lady had told her the persecution was over, why was she so worried?"