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Judge rejects bid to adjourn Omagh civil action

By Staff reporter

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THE judge in charge of the multi-million-pound Omagh bomb compensation case yesterday rejected a bid to have the trial adjourned.

With the civil action due to begin at the High Court in Belfast next week, Mr Justice Morgan also dismissed an application for a ban on any publicity of the proceedings.

Both requests were made by lawyers for Colm Murphy, one of the five men being sued by relatives of some of

the 29 people murdered in the Real IRA atrocity.

Murphy (54) is facing a retrial in the Republic on conspiracy charges linked to the August 1998 blast after having his original conviction quashed on appeal.

Mary Higgins QC urged Mr Justice Morgan to adjourn the civil case until those criminal proceedings have been completed, expressing fears of possibly prejudicing his trial.

"If you refuse that there would then be [an application] for a blanket ban on publicity of this case," she said.

But refusing both requests, Mr Justice Morgan said that if the Republic's attorney general indicated any concerns over the conduct of Murphy's trial the court would then take the appropriate steps.

Murphy, Seamus Daly, Seamus McKenna, Liam Campbell and convicted Real IRA leader Michael McKeivitt are being sued by the Omagh families in a £14 million civil action. They have denied

liability.

Nearly seven years after writs were first served on the five men, Lord Brennan QC, for the relatives, is due to open the case next Monday.

Part of the proceedings are expected to involve Mr Justice Morgan travelling to Dublin to take evidence from 24 Garda officers.


Lord Brennan told the court yesterday, however, that witness statements have not yet been received from all of the officers.

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