



Tony Blair urged Gordon Brown to persuade the Labour MP who led the campaign to expose News of the World phone-hacking to back off, friends of Mr Brown said last night.

Well-placed sources said Mr Blair, who has close links with the paper's owner Rupert Murdoch, wanted Mr Brown to get his ally Tom Watson to lay off the News International (NI) title, but Mr Brown refused.

The assertion that Mr Blair tried to help Mr Murdoch came amid claims that:

- Mr Watson was told Mrs Brooks 'will pursue you for the rest of your life' over his stance.
- Mrs Brooks begged Blairite ex-Cabinet Minister Tessa Jowell to help 'stop this madman Tom Watson' – and also sought help from her friend, Mr Blair.
- Labour MP Chris Bryant, a phone-hack victim, branded NI 'gangsters'.
- A NI executive threatened to take revenge on Ed Miliband for saying Mrs Brooks should quit.

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