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This is one of the most pleasant tasks that I have had to undertake since I assumed office.

During your long ordeal, Dr. Herrema, decent Irishmen everywhere hung their heads in shame and it was with a sense of profound relief and joy that we learned of your release without harm.

There is a great deal more that I would like to say about the events in which you were caught up but those matters are now the subject of proceedings in our courts and on that account I must be extremely circumspect in the remarks I make.

During your husband's long imprisonment you, Mrs. Herrema, had to endure great mental pain and anguish. Although subjected to a lot of publicity and despite all the strain and suffering, you were always dignified and gracious and your demeanour throughout was a source of inspiration and support to the Government and the Garda Síochána in their handling of the situation.

This honour which I have the pleasure of granting to both of you to-day is the Government's, and the people's, way of saying "thank you" for the distinguished service which you have rendered to this country.

Provision for the granting of Irish citizenship as a token of honour is contained in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956. The conferring of such citizenship is the highest honour that the State can confer on a citizen of another country and it is not granted lightly. May I say that it has been granted only once before in the 19 years since the Act was passed.

Because it has been rather loosely referred to in the media as honorary citizenship, there may be a tendency to regard the honour as conferring something less than citizenship in the fullest and truest sense of that term. I would like to assure you that this is not so and that, in fact, the citizenship which you are now acquiring is as real and as genuine as that which I myself enjoy.

I trust that wherever you may go in the future, you will always return to visit us. This is now your second home and there will always be a welcome for you here.