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Stormont Castle, Belfast
22 January 1975

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WAS ISSUED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 1975):

In the House of Commons last week I set out the British Government's policy in relation to Northern Ireland. I sought to lay before the House the elements of a policy which could bring an end to violence and set in motion a process of discussions. I want to remind the people of Northern Ireland of the main points of the Government's policy.

The first requirement of any process of discussion in Northern Ireland is that there must be a genuine and sustained cessation of violence.

In response to a genuine and sustained cessation of violence the army could be gradually withdrawn to barracks and reduced to peacetime levels.

Once I am satisfied that violence has come to a permanent end I shall be prepared to speed up the rate of releases with a view to releasing all detainees.

Provisional and Official Sinn Fein as well as the Ulster Volunteer Force, which I deproscribed last May, are free to take part in genuine political activity within the law and give their views to my officials.

This remains my position. There have been further discussions between my officials and Provisional Sinn Fein to clarify points made in my public statements and about arrangements that might be made to ensure that any ceasefire did not break down. My officials made it clear that as I said on 19 January 'if the ceasefire continues I would wish and I am sure that the people of Northern Ireland would wish to see

effective arrangements made to ensure that it did not break down'. I attach very great importance to this and practical arrangements would be necessary.

My officials have also made it clear to members of the Provisional Sinn Fein that as long as violence continues in the way that it has in the last few days there can be no point in detailed discussion of such arrangements. When violence ceases my officials will be ready to talk again to members of Provisional Sinn Fein, particularly about arrangements designed to ensure effectively that the ceasefire did not break down.

There have also been discussions with members of Loyalist and other organisations. These will continue on the basis of my public statements. I will myself continue to be available to elected representatives in Westminster and Northern Ireland.