



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

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FRIENDS OF IRELAND
ST PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT

MARCH 17, 1991

As Friends of Ireland in the United States Congress, we join again with Irish Americans everywhere to honor Ireland. We congratulate the new President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, on her election. We look forward to her visiting the United States. We also wish to send our best wishes to Dr Patrick Hillery on his retirement and to thank him for the courtesy and consideration which he has extended to Americans over the last 14 years.

The United States enjoys a unique and special relationship with both Ireland and Great Britain and we shall continue in our efforts to assist both of these friends in their efforts to achieve political progress, peace, justice and an end to all forms of discrimination in Northern Ireland.

The Friends of Ireland remain fully committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and welcome its recent and progressive extension into the economic and social area. The Friends also welcome and endorse the willingness of the Irish Government to consider a new and transcending Agreement, embracing the totality of relationships within Ireland and between Britain and Ireland, which would be directly and freely negotiated between all the potential participants of a new Agreement.

We, the Friends of Ireland, have, over the years, affirmed our abhorrence of violence in any form and by any means. We condemn absolutely and unequivocally all efforts by the men of violence to achieve political progress through the bomb and the bullet. Sectarian murder, as took place last week in Cappagh, only deepen

the divide between people and sets back efforts to bring the communities together. Nothing can be served by such senseless violence or by the wanton taking of life by indiscriminate bombing in Britain. We deplore in the strongest possible terms the recent attack on 10 Downing Street by the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

We remain deeply concerned about a number of fatalities inflicted by the British Army on members of the nationalist community in controversial circumstances and the increase of such incidents in 1990, particularly in the shooting of Fergal Caraher at Cullyhanna.

We believe that it is now surely time for a thorough examination of [the whole area of] the lethal use of force by the Security Forces including the investigative process in such cases and of the adequacy of existing law. We believe that the British authorities should accept the recommendations made by the SACHR to adopt the stringent role adopted by the UN Basic Principles governing the use of lethal force.

We understand that progress has been made in improving the relations between the security forces and nationalist community. We are however concerned as to the harrassment and policing of areas in the nationalist community by the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). The Anglo-Irish Accord undertook that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, the UDR would only operate in support of the police in operations involving direct contact with the nationalist community. Progress in achieving this objective falls far short of our hopes.

The Friends are deeply concerned about the present legal difficulties with the new fair employment legislation and expect these to be fully and satisfactorily resolved immediately. The Friends attach the greatest importance to the intensive

implementation of this new legislation, including the relation to the District Councils in Northern Ireland, and will be monitoring carefully the effectiveness of, and the pace of change being brought about by this legislation.

Last year, we urged the British Government to support the fullest possible review of the Birmingham Six case. We deplore the fact it has taken nearly 17 years for the wheels of justice to turn in this case. Nonetheless, we are heartened to note that the Director of Public Prosecutions in Britain is seeking to no longer sustain this case before the Appeal court. Inevitably therefore it is only a matter of days before these innocent men are released. Nothing can give back to them the 17 years of freedom which they have been denied and the tragic suffering they have had to endure. The resolution of the Birmingham Six case, together with the cases of the Guildford Four and the Maguire family, is important evidence of the continuing cooperation between the British and Irish Governments.
