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Brown 'will never forget' thousands of victims in North

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FRANK MILLAR, London Editor

HOUSE OF COMMONS: BRITISH PRIME minister Gordon Brown has said he “will never forget the thousands of innocent victims in Northern Ireland” and assured MPs that “no justification” will ever be accepted for terrorist violence.

Mr Brown’s robust remarks came in seeming support for DUP deputy leader Nigel Dodds’s assertion that “there can never be an equivalence between terrorists, on the one hand, and the innocent victims of terror on the other”.

Assuming Mr Brown’s support for that principle, Mr Dodds asked the prime minister: “Does he therefore acknowledge the deep hurt and offence that has been caused by the obnoxious proposal in the Eames-Bradley report . . . on the past in Northern Ireland, which suggests a £12,000 payment to all relatives of everyone killed, regardless of their status – which effectively does away with the distinction between murderers and those whom they went out to murder and kill?”

Mr Brown replied: “There can be no justification for terrorist violence, and there will be no justification ever given for it.

“The issues raised . . . by Archbishop Eames and Mr Bradley are very serious indeed, and I understand why one of their recommendations has evoked such controversy in Northern Ireland.”

Mr Brown said his government would consider the report “with great care” and reply in due course. “I believe that some of the recommendations will be acceptable to all parties, such as settling outstanding cases, pushing forward with reconciliation, and having a reconciliation fund that will help different groups to come together so that we can get away from the incidents of the past.”

However, the prime minister went on: “I will never forget the thousands of innocent victims in Northern Ireland. I know that speaks for the whole community in NI when he

says that we must respect the fact that innocent people lost their lives, and that should never be forgotten.”

Conservative shadow NI secretary Owen Paterson said: “Those people who carried out vicious acts . . . cannot be put on the same level as their victims – any attempt to do so would be repugnant.”

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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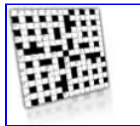
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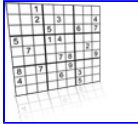
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