



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Our Ref JH\JD

8 August 1996

5 Bayview Terrace
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Rt Hon John Major MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON

Dear Prime Minister

Thank you for your letter of 24 July and for the separate words which you attached. I am awaiting a response from Gerry Adams to those words.

In your letter you also summarised the verbal account that I had given on Sinn Fein's position about a renewed IRA ceasefire and all party negotiations and you rightly point out that it is vital that there be no misunderstanding on these issues. For that reason I asked Mr Adams to set out the position of Sinn Fein on those issues and I enclose his reply.

I think it would be helpful if your officials were to meet Sinn Fein in order to ensure absolute clarity on these and any other matters so that we do everything in our power to secure a lasting peace.

Yours sincerely

John Hume

1 Assurances that there would be no preconditions to negotiations or in negotiations. This specifically relates to a demand for decommissioning being elevated to a precondition in negotiations. Republicans have made it clear that they will not want to become involved in a decommissioning conference.

2 A reasonable time-frame for the negotiations. Given the experience to date both within the negotiations process at Stormont and before that over the 18 months of the IRA cessation, it is obvious that some type of agreed time-frame is necessary. Republicans argue that if the present talks underway at Stormont are to be the beginning of a serious effort, on the part of the British government, to move towards a democratic settlement, then there is a responsibility on the British government to convince those who are sceptical of this that their suspicions are incorrect.

3 Republicans feel that the British government need to build confidence in the peace process. This relates not just to the over-all project as outlined above, but to supplementary measures also. For example, the treatment of prisoners, the official attitude to Irish culture, the refusal to establish an acceptable policing service, emergency legislation, the use of plastic bullets, the parades issue and the wider issues, including the continued need to reverse discrimination, are all matters in Sinn Fein's view, which need attention not only in their own right but as part of the confidence building measures which your government could undertake.

The issues which need to be addressed therefore are:-

No preconditions.

A time frame.

Confidence building measures.