



Sinn Féin

...news release/nuacht ráiteas...

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Adams calls for new peace process

Following the traumatic events of the last week Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams has called on John Major and John Bruton to carry out an "urgent, wholesale review of the peace process" because in its current form the peace process is over.

He has also called for an end to the unionist veto and for both governments to follow an "equality agenda" which will bring practical changes to people's lives, particularly nationalists.

Mr. Adams said:

"Events over the last week in the 6 county statelet have been traumatic. For nationalists their worst fears have been realised by the capitulation of the British government to the campaign of mass intimidation, murder, violence and threats of violence orchestrated by the political leaderships of Unionism.

"This has many profound implications. If we are to successfully rebuild a peace process which has any hope of achieving a real peace settlement then I firmly believe that there must be a wholesale review of the peace process, by all the parties involved and particularly the two governments and there clearly must now be a new, coherent and viable strategy developed.

"This requires that a number of core issues be looked at afresh.

The Unionist Veto

The events of the Garvaghy Road and in the days before that prove beyond any lingering doubt, that the unionists cannot have a veto over any aspect of the talks, their conduct or their outcome or over any other matter. Such a veto is not only undemocratic, a point we have made repeatedly, but it is counter-productive and means in effect that there will be no equality, no democracy and no political change. The two governments clearly need to stand up to Unionism and the Irish government needs to have a clear view of how this is to be done. No one should have a veto.

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Press Office, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Ireland.

Tel: 8726100 Fax: 8733441

Oifig Preas, 44 Cearnóg Pharnell, Baile Atha Cliath 1.

Fón: 8726100 Facs: 8733441

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The Equality Agenda

The commitment of the two governments to equality of treatment has been stated and restated as one of the basic human rights which was to be acted upon immediately and effectively. But any notion that there is or can be equality of treatment within the political context of the 6 county state disappeared on the Garvaghy Road. The promises from Dublin and London since the Anglo Irish Agreement of 1985 until now are worthless. The British government has no equality agenda. This issue needs to be addressed directly.

The Mitchell Principles

The orchestrated campaign of mass intimidation, of violence and threats of violence, totally undermines the Unionist and Loyalist Parties declared commitment to the Mitchell Principles.

It will clearly be immensely damaging if, while Sinn Féin remains locked out, the unionists are able to withdraw from talks, engage in an orchestrated campaign of mass intimidation and terror and then walk back into talks again. This is clearly the intention of the British government but pretending that the events of last week did not happen, or that they have no bearing on the talks process is to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Until now when the peace process has been in difficulties the two governments and particularly the British government have engaged in a cosmetic band-aid crisis management approach. Following the events of the past week and the collapse of the London government in the face of a Unionist revolt the peace process, as we know it, is over. It needs to be rebuilt.

If a new peace process is to be rebuilt on a more stable basis than the last one, and it must be rebuilt, then there has to be recognition by London and Dublin that to date the unionist politicians have been rewarded for their refusal to engage in any meaningful way with the effort to bring about the type of changes which are necessary to anchor a peace process. It is now patently clear that a new peace process needs to be built on the basis of equality and without any preconditions or vetoes.

If there is to be peace there must be change. The unionists are opposed to change and they have tried to minimise that change. If we are to have peace the onus must go back on the governments to bring about that change.

There are two ways to go forward. One is that the governments begin proper talks with all the parties invited to take part with assurances to all the conflicting interests that there will be real negotiations within an agreed timeframe, without preconditions, and with the British government in particular initiating the kind of confidence building measures which have been so necessary for some time.

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If the Unionists refuse to engage then the governments should proceed with those parties which are committed to building a real peace process and by so doing to create the conditions for the full involvement of all parties in the shortest time possible. It must be remembered that the Irish and British governments have agreed to do just this and that under paragraph 47 of the Framework Document, they have made commitments to move the situation forward in this way.

The Irish government obviously has a responsibility to get the British government to face up to its commitments. Mr. Bruton's public repudiation of the British capitulation to David Trimble and Ian Paisley's threats shows that he accepts the need for the Irish governments position to be put clearly and unapologetically on the public record when the need arises. However this needs to be done on a more consistent and strategic way so that International opinion including progressive opinion in Britain can be mobilised behind the reasonable position of Irish nationalism.

I welcome the Irish government's forthright and well publicised attitude to recent events but one of the flaws in Dublin's position is that the British government know that the Irish government shares its agenda of excluding those who vote for Sinn Féin. The Taoiseach should reconsider his position on this. It is entirely inconsistent.

For example if the people of Garvaghy Road wanted to meet John Bruton, would they be refused if Sinn Féin representatives were on the delegation? If David Trimble or Ian Paisley wanted to meet the Taoiseach they would properly and correctly be received to represent the views of their electorate.