

DRAFT

Contact with Sinn Féin

Following the breakdown of the IRA ceasefire on 9th February, the Government decided that it should terminate all Ministerial contact, but maintain limited official contact, with Sinn Féin.

Official contact was maintained in the belief that it would be more likely to be of assistance to Sinn Féin in ensuring the IRA restored the August '94 ceasefire than would a policy of total refusal of Government contact.

The Government has done everything possible to facilitate Sinn Féin's entry into the negotiations launched on 10 June. Sinn Féin have been provided, through official contacts, with all the information they could possibly need to make a decision to go to the IRA and seek a restoration of the complete cessation of violence which they announced in August, 1994.

The Government is seriously concerned that, despite this, Sinn Féin has not yet got the IRA to restore the ceasefire. The murder of Detective Garda McCabe in Adare, the serious injuries inflicted on Detective Garda O'Sullivan and the bombing outrage in Manchester in which hundreds of people were injured, provide no grounds for confidence that Sinn Féin can, with credibility, follow the road of peace and democracy.

There has been no recent meeting at official level with Sinn Féin. The question of further meetings, if any, with Sinn Féin will be kept under review including in light of the responses to the questions put to them publicly last evening on behalf of the Government.

(1) Has Mr. Adams yet gone to the IRA to ask for a ceasefire and if not why?

(2) Does Sinn Féin continue to support the "armed struggle" of the IRA?

The only purpose of any such meeting would be to obtain an up to date assessment from Sinn Féin of the IRA's intentions towards a renewed ceasefire, against the background of that organisation's recent acts of violence.

In the meantime, all aspects of the situation are being kept under review.

On the security side, we have, given the evidence of enhanced threat, conducted an intensive security review in recent days and are in continuing contact with the British authorities on all matters of security co-operation.

On the political side, the Government remain committed to making a success of multi-party negotiations which represent the best prospect for political progress for years. We are satisfied that the interests of all the people on this island and in Britain are adequately represented by those currently round the negotiating table.