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GERRY ADAMS
SINN FÉIN
PRESIDENT

31/1/97.

Mr John Major MP.
10 Downing Street
London.

A Chara,

I am writing to you regarding the continued exclusion of our party from the discussions at Stormont. This is despite the fact that Sinn Fein has a larger electoral mandate than most of the parties in attendance.

On Monday, 27/1/97, Michael Ancram outlined his belief that the parties representing the loyalist paramilitaries in the talks should not be excluded despite the very obvious and blatant breaches in their conditional ceasefire. I share the view that these parties should remain at the talks. But Sinn Fein should be at the talks also.

As you know, Sinn Fein does not represent the IRA. Sinn Fein is not involved in political violence. We are a peaceful, democratic party committed to negotiations and agreement to resolve the conflict in this country. We are entitled to be involved in negotiations on behalf of the tens of thousands of Irish people who vote for our party. The exclusion of Sinn Fein is undemocratic and underlines the hypocrisy and double standards which have marked the British government's tactical approach to the peace process throughout. The clear purpose has been to prevent Sinn Fein involvement in political negotiations.

The reality is that the British government has not dealt with Sinn Fein on the basis of equality of treatment. It was your government which excluded Sinn Fein from the talks. It was your government which persistently called into question the quality of the IRA cessation.

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An entirely different set of rules are applied in relation to loyalist participation. The words of the CLMC are, apparently, enough to allow the loyalist parties to participate in dialogue when the loyalists paramilitaries are quite blatantly involved in sectarian violence, when events on the ground have shown the loyalist ceasefire to be an empty charade.

Similarly your government has also chosen to ignore the involvement of the unionist parties in the mass intimidation and violence which surrounded the Orange march through the Garvaghy Road last July.

Then there is your government's own responsibility for the widespread violence used by your forces, including the firing of 6 000 plastic bullets and the British Army killing of Dermot Mc Shane in Derry last July.

The reality which you refuse to acknowledge is that Sinn Fein has an electoral mandate and the democratic right to represent our electorate at any political talks on the future of this island. You exclude us from talks and deny our party and our electorate our democratic rights.

On December 14 last you rejected proposals put to you by John Hume and myself on October 10. These proposals were aimed at restoring the peace process. Instead a whole new set of preconditions and obstacles were outlined unilaterally by you in relation to Sinn Fein's entry into talks.

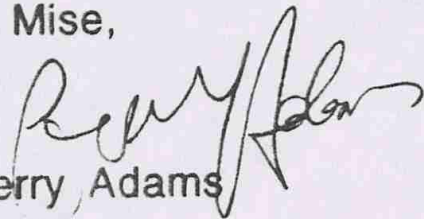
The reality is that the demands which are being made of Sinn Fein on matters over which we have no control are not being applied to the other parties.

The most recent example of this is the loyalist parties which can attend the talks while the UDA and the UVF, which they represent, continue to target nationalists and republicans, train, manufacture weapons, import arms. In addition they carry out armed, punishment beatings and (increasingly) shootings, intimidation and attacks on isolated catholic families and communities. Their recent car bomb attacks have manifestly ended their ceasefire.

Clearly what is required if we are to salvage and develop the opportunity for peace is the recognition of all electoral mandates, an end to these double standards and the construction of a credible and inclusive process of negotiations which is the only means to an agreed

and lasting peace settlement. The policy of your government has prevented this happening. Despite this the onus to put in place a credible negotiations process still lies with the two governments.

Is Mise,


Gerry Adams