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DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO JOHN HUME MP

I understand that Patrick Mayhew has agreed to see you and some of the relatives of those who lost their lives on Bloody Sunday. I am pleased that the meeting has been arranged - it is important that the families know that their views can always be represented through normal political means.

I hope that I need hardly repeat my appreciation for the efforts you yourself have made to find accommodation upon this and so may other issues. I repeat my assurance to you that any new evidence the families or others have about what happened on 30 January 1972 will be considered thoroughly.

Very naturally, the 25th anniversary of that terrible day has been the occasion for much remembrance and grief. I well understand the pain it will have occasioned to those who lost loved ones. As I know you understand, I cannot place myself in judgement upon the actions of any of those involved after a quarter of a century, except that I regard those were killed as innocent of any allegation that they were shot while handling firearms or explosives, as I have long made clear to you. What I can do, however, is something that follows naturally from that, I can express profound regret that the events of that tragic day should ever have occurred: and this I do readily and willingly.

No-one should forget Bloody Sunday. Nor should we forget the other people killed in 1972 and in the long years of conflict before and since. Remembrance and sorrowing must not, however, be allowed to divert us from the duty to find a peaceful resolution to our deep rooted problems. A political settlement which ensures that there are no more such deaths remains my priority.