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SINN FEIN'S ENTRY INTO POLITICAL TALKS

Lines to take following recent security incidents in England and Northern Ireland

- these were very serious, repugnant incidents deliberately intended to cause maximum disruption (and, in some instances, to threaten life).
- only an organisation which is contemptuous of the views and wishes of others could see any purpose whatsoever in these incidents. (I am only glad that the IRA have had the response they deserve from the people of Liverpool, where the race was successfully completed on Monday).
- every atrocity of this kind widens the credibility gap which Sinn Fein and the IRA will have to bridge before they are fit to be invited to talks.
- Sinn Fein and the IRA cannot play at democracy. Sinn Fein cannot, on the one hand, demand immediate access to political negotiations while, on the other, the IRA carry out activities such as these.
- if the IRA thinks that these activities, along with the rest of its activities over the past 25 years, will be forgotten in a week or two's time they are badly mistaken. Sinn Fein say they want peace but events like these will make all who are already committed to democracy look doubly carefully at the words and actions of Sinn Fein and the IRA in future.
- I did not speculate on a date for Sinn Fein's entry to talks before these incidents, and will not do so now. Sinn Fein know what they have to do if they are to be invited to talks: there must be a genuine ceasefire and a commitment to democratic means. It is up to them how quickly, through words and actions, they choose to convince people that the violence is over for good. It is however quite clear that incidents such as these will make it harder to be convinced that any announcement of a ceasefire is unequivocal and credible. This must affect the timescale that any such consideration is likely to take.

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