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10 DOWNING STREET  
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21 Irish Prisoners.cel

From the Private Secretary

22 September 1997

Dear Ken,

### IRISH PRISONERS

The Prime Minister was grateful for the Home Secretary's minute of 18 September, setting out his proposed approach on the difficult issue of the transfer and repatriation of Irish prisoners sentenced for terrorist offences in England. The Prime Minister believes that the Home Secretary's cautious approach is right. But this is a particularly sensitive moment in the peace process and it is always difficult to avoid any changes in this area being seen, particularly by the Unionists, simply as appeasement of Sinn Fein. The Prime Minister therefore agrees that the Home Secretary should talk again to the Irish Minister for Justice before making any final decisions, and that any eventual announcements should be as low key as possible. He would also be grateful if you would check with this office again before any announcements are made, to ensure that we are happy with the proposed timing.

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries to other members of IN, to Michael Lugton (Scottish Office) and Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Sutton Esq  
Home Office

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