

## REPLY TO HUNTER

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Madam Speaker, there has been enough rumour and disinformation on this issue. We have had a number of exchanges with the Hon. Member for Foyle and others about the possibility of a new IRA ceasefire. We have made absolutely clear throughout that the IRA and Sinn Fein should give up violence once and for all and commit themselves to exclusively peaceful means. We have also made clear that we cannot - and will not - change our policy to bargain for a ceasefire.

In order that this should be absolutely clear, we are publishing today a statement of our policy which we sent to the Hon. Member for Foyle last weekend. A copy is being placed in the Library of the House, together with a short explanatory statement.

The talks are likely to break for Christmas soon and to resume later in January. When Sinn Fein could join the talks depends on their own actions. We need to see an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire. We need to make a credible judgement that it is lasting. We need to know they will sign up to the Mitchell principles. These matters are in Sinn Fein's hands. We are not seeking delay. We wish to see inclusive talks involving all parties as soon as possible.

But if Sinn Fein continue to exclude themselves, the talks must and will go on without them.