

Incl



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PA has seen

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Dear Michael

And

HUNGER STRIKE

The Prime Minister will be aware from the background note provided with the briefing for her Questions this afternoon that Gerry Adams has made it clear publicly that if the hunger strikers, individually or collectively, wish to end their hunger strike this would cause no embarrassment to the Provisional Sinn Fein (ie to the Provision IRA). Since that note was written we have learned that the hunger strikers have rejected an appeal from Dr Edward Daly, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Londonderry, to end their fast and have said they will not alter their position until "the British Government decide to honourably settle the issue".

My Secretary of State has been considering in the light of this move whether there is any initiative he ought to take. In his view the likelihood is that the external pressures - from the families, from interested priests, from others concerned about the situation - will now be focussed upon Brendan McFarlane as the "hard man" who is apparently discouraging the hunger strikers from ending their fast. His judgment is that there would be advantage in allowing these pressures to build up for a while to see what effect they have.

At the same time we propose to make it clear through press briefing that we welcome Adams' statement that the PSF are not pressing the hunger strikers to continue; and that we also welcome the statement by Bishop Daly referred to above. We remain, as always, ready to give clarification of the Government's position to any protesting prisoner (including McFarlane) who may ask for it; but we are not prepared to negotiate. If asked why we decline to give

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clarification to the hunger strikers with McFarlane present, we shall explain that McFarlane has already made it clear to an Assistant Governor that he is not interested in a clarification of HMG's position, but only in a negotiation of the prisoners' five demands.

My Secretary of State will of course keep the evolving situation under continuous review; but this indicates our stance for the present.

*Yours sincerely
Mike Stephens*

M W HOPKINS

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E.R.

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

Hunger Strike and Security Situation in Northern Ireland

Will the Prime Minister comment on Mr Livingstone's Black Balloon protest
[Mr Livingstone is sponsoring a 48 hour fast in support of the hunger strikers and plans to release 100s of Black Balloons tomorrow to coincide with the Royal Wedding procession.]

The demonstration is as disgraceful as Mr Livingstone's recent statement in support of the terrorists campaign of violence in Northern Ireland. The demonstration will be as offensive to those living in London as it is to the vast majority of us in this House. Mr Livingstone should make clear^{particularly} to visitors to London celebrating the Royal Wedding that his views are his own and are not in any way representative.

BACKGROUND NOTE

H Block demonstrations passed off without serious incident and there were no shooting attacks on the security forces over the weekend. But a youth was shot dead in what appears to have been an argument over a weapons cache and there were several bomb incidents. In Belfast, three people were injured when a booby trap bomb exploded in a van which had earlier been hijacked and then abandoned, a booby trapped car blew up in Newry, an incendiary device attached to a train was neutralised in Portadown and a UDR soldier had a lucky escape when a device was found attached to his car at Cookstown RUC station.

Shots were fired at a policeman yesterday in the Shankill area of Belfast. He is seriously ill. A 13 year old girl was also hit but her condition is satisfactory. The shots were fired from the adjoining predominantly Catholic Clonard area. Gerry Adams (Vice President of Provisional Sinn Fein) and two other men who were in the area at the time were arrested but subsequently released. The INLA have claimed responsibility for the shooting and have regretted injuring the girl.

Kieran Doherty and Kevin Lynch have been on hunger strike the longest. Doherty's condition is stable, but Lynch has developed an instability in his heartbeat and there must be a danger of his sudden collapse and death. The prolonged period of stability in Doherty's condition has given rise to speculation that he may be receiving some form of nourishment, but there is no medical evidence to confirm this.