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THE PRIME MINISTER

10 April 1980

*Dear Mr. McGuire,*

You wrote to me on 22 March enclosing a "dossier on British Army harassment in the Armagh/Keady area" which had been compiled by Father Raymond Murray.

I am sure Father Murray acted in good faith in compiling his document on the basis of statements made to him by local residents. I must say, however, that the Army's version of what took place on each occasion is entirely different to that of Father Murray and I have no reason to doubt the Army's version.

I hope that Father Murray will not lose sight of the fact that the Army, together with the RUC, is trying to combat a campaign of vicious terrorism throughout Northern Ireland and that to a large extent youths are the perpetrators of much of the crime associated with this campaign. It is natural, therefore, that youths, whether Roman Catholic or otherwise, will attract the attention of security force patrols as they go about their tasks. This is particularly so in cases where youths are openly hostile towards the security forces which was, I am informed, the case in a number of the incidents mentioned by Father Murray.

Nevertheless, neither I nor the Government would condone deliberate harassment of the population, and Army Commanders are well aware of that fact. Army Commanders are also fully aware of the need for good community relations and they go out of their way to impress this upon their troops.

/ May I remind

*AS*



May I remind you that there is a well-established procedure whereby members of the public may enter a formal complaint with the police if they feel that a crime has been committed by a member of the security forces. The police will thoroughly investigate any such report and the papers will be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for his consideration.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dehler

M. F. Maguire, Esq., M.P.