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MPS

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

1 July 1981

Dear Miss McQuinn,

Thank you for your letter of 16 June about your brother's decision to go on hunger strike. You had written on the previous day to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I would like you to accept this letter as a reply to both.

I entirely understand the anguish which both you and your family must be feeling at this time. I regret the situation which has arisen whereby young men have determined to throw away their lives in pursuit of an objective which they must realise now is unattainable. The Government has constantly made it clear that it remains committed to a fair and humane regime which can be enjoyed by all prisoners in Northern Ireland, but that the demands put forward on behalf of the hunger strikers go far beyond what any reasonable Government would be prepared to concede.

After the tragic events of the past weeks, which have caused such suffering not only to those directly involved but to the community at large, this fact must surely now be clear to everyone

/involved.

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involved. I would urge you to explain to your brother what the true situation is and that his demands cannot be the subject of negotiation. I would sincerely hope that your brother would be prepared to accept this advice if it comes from those he trusts, and that he may yet be prepared to abandon his fast and so save his life.

Yours sincerely

Raymond D. Heister

Miss Kathleen McElwee