

CONFIDENTIAL



File 75

Ireland

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

7 February 1983

B/F

Thank you for your letter of 2 February about the case of Dolours Price which the Prime Minister has now seen. While she understands the reasons which prompted your Secretary of State to take the view set out in your letter, Mrs. Thatcher is not persuaded that it would be right to cancel the residence condition attached to Miss Price's licence at this stage. Perhaps you could let me know how your Secretary of State wishes to proceed.

TIM FLESHER

D.A. Hill, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office

CONFIDENTIAL





NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
GREAT GEORGE STREET,  
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

William Rickett Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

Prime Minister

Dr 3/2

2 February 1983

Dear Willie

I think the  
decision is wrong

mt

mt

DOLOURS PRICE

You may recall the case of this woman, who with her sister Marian and others was sentenced to life imprisonment and a concurrent term of twenty years for her part in the London car bombings in 1973. The two sisters were transferred to Northern Ireland in 1975; Marian Price was released on licence on medical grounds by the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr Atkins) in April 1980, and Dolours was also released, again on medical grounds, a year later. In each case the balance of the fixed term of imprisonment was remitted by the exercise of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy.

The Prime Minister was consulted in advance about both cases, and also about that of Miss Pauline McLaughlin, who was released on licence in January 1981 from a sentence of detention during the Secretary of State's pleasure (the equivalent of a life sentence, imposed where a person convicted of murder was under eighteen at the time of the crime). In Pauline McLaughlin's case, at the express wish of the Prime Minister, a condition was included in the licence specifying that she should not leave Northern Ireland without the prior permission of the Secretary of State. This had not been done in Marian Price's case.

When Dolours Price was released on licence on 22 April 1981 - at that time she was in Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast - the licence included the same condition of residence, which has remained in force since.

We received a request in the summer of 1981 on Dolours Price's behalf that she should be allowed to take a holiday in the Irish Republic. Mike Hopkins wrote to Michael Alexander on 31 July explaining the circumstances in which Mr Atkins had thought it right to approve this.

/...



CONFIDENTIAL

Intelligence reports indicate that Miss Price is now working as a freelance journalist in Dublin, but there has been no evidence or intelligence to suggest that she has been involved since her release with any illegal organisation or with any kind of terrorist activity.

It would be possible on the basis of the information that Miss Price was in Dublin in breach of her licence to revoke formally the licence and recall her to prison on the grounds that she had knowingly and deliberately broken a condition of her licence. The reality is, however, that there is no way of putting the recall order into effect while Miss Price remains outside the United Kingdom. To put it into effect on her return to Northern Ireland would be perceived as highly provocative by the whole Catholic community and accordingly no action has been taken to date.

The Secretary of State has now been asked by Cardinal O Fiaich if he would be willing to cancel the residence condition in view of the fact that Miss Price has shown no signs of becoming reinvolved with any illegal organisation in the twenty-two months or so since her release, and in view of the difficulty of enforcing the restriction on residence, Mr Prior is disposed to agree to cancel this particular condition. The other conditions requiring Miss Price not to become involved in any way with terrorism or with any proscribed organisation, will remain in force, and the licence will always remain subject to revocation if at any time, and for whatever reason, this course seems desirable in the public interest.

Mr Prior has thought it right, in view of the close personal interest which was taken by No 10 in the cases of both the Price sisters and that of Pauline McLaughlin, to let the Prime Minister know of his intentions. If the residence condition in regard to Dolours Price is cancelled, we shall consider taking similar action in the case of Miss McLaughlin; that will depend, however, on the latest information about her activities and general way of life.

I should perhaps add that we have no up-to-date information about the current mental or physical health of any of the three women.

Yours ever

Derek Hill

D A HILL

em

CONFIDENTIAL



Inland April 1980  
Kellau 7 Manai Puci

