



FROM: JONATHAN STEPHENS
Associate Political Director (L)
17 October 1997

Mr Watkins

cc Mr Thomas
Mr Bell
Mr Daniell
Mr Beeton
Mr Brooker
Mr Ferguson ^{19/10}
Mr Hill
Mr Maccabe
Mr Woods (L&B)
Ms Murphy

VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Thank you for inviting me to your meeting this afternoon, but I shall not be able to attend. (Incidentally, should Press Office be invited?) Could I feed in a few thoughts reflecting the useful discussion we had a day or so ago over the phone?

2. First, the subject is important and could potentially play a significant role alongside political progress. But the Government needs to decide whether it is going to treat the issue seriously and on a long term basis, or regard it as a short term expedient to meet the concerns of one side of the community.
3. If the former, then I think any approach needs to be carefully prepared, distanced from Government and divorced as far as possible from overt politics. It needs also to take genuine account of what the victims themselves feel and think is appropriate.
4. In that respect, I think the idea of commissioning some sort of study or review to identify an appropriate way forward is a good one. (Although if we could get someone else - the four church leaders? - to commission it, that might be even better). Serving or retired politicians strike me as just the wrong sort of people for this job. I think we

should be looking among the churches, among victims themselves and among credible community leaders.

5. We should not forget victims outside Northern Ireland - in Great Britain and the Republic. [REDACTED]

6. Finally, we are all conscious of the definitional problems. I think we should deliberately steer away from any attempt to define who the victims are.

(Signed JAS)

JONATHAN STEPHENS
11 Millbank
Ext 6469

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