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President praises the 'triumph of hope over despair'

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By Ian Graham
Saturday August 16 2008

[PRESIDENT Mary McAleese](#) yesterday praised the people of [Omagh](#) for their remarkable contribution to the consolidation of the North's peace process.

Mrs McAleese said that coming so soon after the signing of the [Good Friday Agreement](#), the bombing seemed designed, not just wilfully to kill and maim innocent people going about their everyday lives, but also to "smother in anger and despair the seeds of a new future that had just been sown".

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In the wake of the bombing, the people of Omagh had demonstrated that the will towards peace and reconciliation embodied in the agreement was stronger and more powerful than any bomb or bullet -- or any attempt by the few to drag the community back into the futility of violence and division, she said. Far from fragmenting along familiar dividing lines as they could easily have done, she said, people of all persuasions embraced each other as one suffering community.

"In doing so, they helped all of us to appreciate in the starkest terms just how precious the opportunity was that had just been given to us to make a new beginning, and how vital it was that we all worked together to turn that opportunity into reality," said Mrs McAleese.

"A decade later, though each still lived with a profound loss and hurt that could never be fully assuaged, "the people of Omagh can take rightful pride in the remarkable contribution they made to the consolidation of an historic peace that is surely growing and deepening by the day," she said.

The President added: "Sadly, Omagh 1998 will always be remembered for the horrific loss of innocent life and the terrible suffering caused to so many.

"But the way that its people responded to that tragedy will also mark Omagh 1998 as a monument to the triumph of hope over despair and to the reality that a truly new dawn had finally broken in [Ireland](#)."

- Ian Graham

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