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Statement issued by the Government Information Bureau  
on behalf of the Taoiseach

The following statement was issued today by the Government Information Bureau on behalf of the Taoiseach:

I learned with dismay and regret of the tragic events in Belfast last night. I condemn unreservedly those responsible for recourse to violence. I extend my sympathy to the families and friends of all those who died.

I have watched with great anxiety the deterioration of the situation in recent weeks. While condemning extremists, I must point out that much responsibility for this deterioration is due to political mistakes and tactical errors to which we have drawn attention. Among these are:

i) the decision to permit the formation of Rifle Clubs of ex-B Specials - at a time when every effort needs to be made to eliminate arms in the North;

ii) insensitivity in dealing with the minority and the failure to provide for reasonable consultation between the security authorities and local community leaders in order to diminish tension and eliminate tactical errors.

I endorsed in Dáil Éireann last week the statement made on this subject on 21 January by the Social Democratic and Labour Party;

iii) the failure to be non-discriminatory in carrying out arms searches;

iv) against this background, the persistent demand for action against the minority in the name of law and order - a minority which still awaits the full implementation of the equality of treatment guaranteed by the Downing Street Declaration a year and a half ago;

v) the affront to moderate minority leadership in Stormont by branding their constructive contributions in important debates as negative and unco-operative and the affront to the minority

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generally in the series of recent speeches by certain Unionists, even including Government Ministers, who continue to attribute all blame to the minority for disruption in Northern society.

In all this, it must be clear that if wise and moderate leadership is not supported, whole communities become disaffected and extremism leads by default.

Once again I would earnestly appeal to all concerned to exercise the utmost restraint, even in face of provocation, and to refuse to respond to incitement. Only in this way can further bloodshed be avoided and peace with justice made to prevail.

6 February 1971.