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**Title:** Message from Edward Heath, British Prime Minister, to Jack Lynch, Taoiseach, regarding the possibility that the Irish government will bring allegations before the European Commission of Human Rights that the British government have been responsible for human rights abuses in relation to persons arrested and interrogated in Northern Ireland.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON.  
EDWARD HEATH, MP, TO THE TAOISEACH, MR. J. LYNCH.

I have seen from reports of statements in the Dail, that your Government is considering bringing before the European Commission of Human Rights allegations that Her Majesty's Government have been responsible for brutality and inhuman treatment in connexion with those arrested and interrogated in Northern Ireland. I should much regret it if your decision was to take such action. I say this, not because there is anything which my Government would wish to conceal. As you know, following widespread allegations in the press that brutal treatment had been inflicted on men arrested on 9 August, my Government set up a Committee to investigate these, under the Chairmanship of Sir Edmund Compton. The report of this Committee, which was made after very thorough investigation but virtually without the co-operation of those about whom the allegations had been made, showed that in regard to the initial arrests there were very few complaints and those that there were had in the Committee's view very little substance. No force but the minimum had been used to achieve arrest and there was no evidence whatever of deliberate brutality on the part of any of the armed forces involved. With regard to the allegations about the methods used during interrogation, the Committee's findings were that there was no evidence of physical brutality, still less of torture or brainwashing, but that there had been physical ill-treatment which raised questions about the methods used in interrogation. In the light of these last findings, the Government considered that it would be right to set up a body to review the principles governing the methods of interrogation used, in view of the

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very difficult issues that arise where the security forces are engaged against a ruthless and deliberate campaign of terror and murder. Lord Parker, a former Lord Chief Justice, has accepted the Chairmanship of a Committee to undertake this task.

My reason for hoping that these problems will not be brought before the European Commission relates rather to the danger that my Government and yours would there be ranged on opposite sides in a public forum on issues which, starting from particular allegations and explanations would be liable to broaden out into charges and counter-charges concerning the operations of the I.R.A., the role they have in Northern Ireland and the support they receive in the Republic. Such a position could hardly fail to result in acrimonious exchanges between our two Governments. This would to my mind be unfortunate given the complexity of the Northern Ireland problem and the need for our two Governments to remain in the closest and friendliest touch about it. This will be particularly necessary if the security situation in the North develops sufficiently favourably for an early impetus to be given to political moves.

As you know, our aim is still to discuss the way forward with representatives of all the communities. We are committed to finding a way to give the minority there an active, permanent and guaranteed role in the life and public affairs of Northern Ireland. As we are making clear in the debate in the House of Commons, the best method and timing for doing this is very much in the forefront of our minds. It is because of these considerations that I hope

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that you will not feel constrained to give way to pressures to take a public stance against us at Strasbourg. If you do, it will no doubt rejoice the hearts of many people in the Republic and some of those among the minority in the North. It will however also please those Protestant extremists who are always most opposed to the maintenance of a reasoned dialogue both public and private between our two Governments.

This seems to me essentially a time in which all those who do not believe in progress through violence should put aside charges and counter-charges; indeed they should keep on one side their differences over ultimate aims, however legitimate it may be to pursue these in due course through diplomatic and constitutional means; their task should be to concentrate on the urgent business of making Northern Ireland once again a place in which all its people, whatever their religion or political views, can work together in peace and prosperity. This is certainly our aim and I feel sure I can count on your support in working for it.

British Embassy,  
DUBLIN.

29 November 1971