

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2010/19/1694
Creation Date(s):	30 April 1980
Extent and medium:	1 page
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
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30 April 1980

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON PROTESTING PRISONERS

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Humphrey Atkins, MP, was asked in a Parliamentary Question today if he would make a statement about the response of the prisoners protesting against the refusal of special category status to the further humanitarian measures which he announced on 26 March.

In a written reply to Mr Michael Shaw (Scarborough), the Secretary of State said:

"The prisoners taking part in the "dirty" protest at Maze prison have refused to accept the additional visits or letters, or to take exercise in PT gear. The few prisoners who are protesting only by refusing to wear prison uniform or to work are taking the additional visits and letters, but so far have not taken exercise.

I believe that some of the parents of the prisoners concerned may have been misled by some of the reports which have appeared in the press about the new arrangements. My Hon Friend the Minister of State (Mr Alison) is accordingly writing to the next-of-kin of all the prisoners explaining the additional humanitarian measures".

NOTE TO NEWS EDITORS

The text of Mr Alison's letters to parents or next-of-kin of protesting prisoners at the Maze and Armagh prisons is attached.