

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

**IRELAND**



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2011/39/1783
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	30 April 1981
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	3 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
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30 April 1981

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WAS ISSUED TODAY BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND, RT HON HUMPHREY ATKINS, MP.

At this time the Provisional IRA have deliberately planned and created a  
climate of tension and fear in a number of areas throughout Northern Ireland.

They have brought about considerable community concern by cynically playing  
upon and fostering inter-sectarian fears with the objective of establishing  
conditions in which violence can be wilfully launched and subsequently  
justified.

Specifically the Provisional IRA are leading people to believe that they  
will come under attack, either by the Security Forces or by paramilitary  
organisations. Residents have been forced to co-operate in publicising the  
hunger strike at HM Prison Maze under the threat that they will be victimised.  
There has been a calculated and cold-blooded campaign designed to create  
a "seige mentality" which will justify the setting up of vigilante and so-called  
"defence committees". All of these activities have one clear objective:  
that is to provide an environment of fear within which the Provisional IRA  
can stir up sectarian conflict, and to enable them to exercise control of  
Catholic areas and present themselves as alone capable of protecting  
threatened people. I believe that knowledge of these intentions is a first  
step towards frustrating them. In one area of Belfast the Provisional IRA are  
contemplating evacuating residents to other parts of the city, burning the



emptied houses and, by throwing the blame to others, further fuel sectarian conflict. Already, they have actually earmarked houses for these intended evacuees and the owners have been ordered to co-operate. In other areas the Provisional IRA are suggesting that arms intended for use against the Catholic community have been moved in. The PIRA intend to build on these rumours in order to justify their own subsequent terrorist activities.

Leaflets have been circulated alleging that certain areas will be "over-run" by Loyalist paramilitaries led by the Security Forces and calling upon residents to stock-pile food and other essential commodities. Those who will not co-operate in supporting the hunger strike are told they will not get essential goods which PIRA claim they will control in a crisis. Most contemptible of all they plan wherever possible to use young people in the confrontation they seek with the Police. Parents have a duty to guard their own children against such manipulations.

The need today, and it cannot be overstated, is for restraint, responsibility and the maintenance of calm and commonsense in the face of a deliberately planned campaign of violence and disruption. Nothing will be gained by anyone attempting to take the law into his own hands. Anyone doing so will only make the proper discharge of their duties by the security forces all the more difficult.



The maintenance of law and order is the proper responsibility of the Government and of the Police, supported as necessary by the Army. I am in the closest touch with the Chief Constable of the RUC and the GOC in Northern Ireland about the activities of the Provisional IRA. We will not hesitate to deal with them. The resources are available and the will is there. Nor will we hesitate to deal with other paramilitary groups whether they call themselves Republican or Loyalist. In this we must have the co-operation of the community as a whole in refusing to be provoked or to do anything to impede the security forces in the carrying out of their duties.

Having pledged the total backing of the security forces, I also say that the role of the community itself is absolutely vital in all of this. Don't play the IRA's game or anybody else's. Don't listen to the Provisionals. Don't believe lies and rumours. Do listen to you local clergymen, councillors and other community leaders. We will be making it our business to ensure that the news media get the facts. So listen to that too. Observe the law. Keep away from trouble. Don't be fooled or misled by men and organisations whose intentions are the direct opposite of your best interests.