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Honorable Members of Congress

from Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Féin

in Reply to Garret FitzGerald

1. I call your attention for the plight of that substantial segment of Irish people whose concerns will not be voiced by Garret FitzGerald. Those whom Garret FitzGerald has ignored demand your consideration urgently. To them, violence, terrorism and the litany of suffering are not detached intellectual concepts or impersonal statistics, but an abiding part of daily life for ourselves, our families and our friends.
2. I raise this plight as one of the many Irish men and women not only ignored but abandoned and sacrificed. I do so in my capacity as one elected by the people of West Belfast, on an abstentionist platform, to the British Parliament and to the British Stormont Assembly, as well as the President of Sinn Féin. I refer to the plight of more than half a million Irish nationalists living in the British-held portion of Ireland, and do so supported by patriotic Irish men and women in the twenty-six counties, who will never abandon fellow Irish citizens to British hegemony.
3. It would be difficult under any circumstances for Americans to fully grasp the terror of life for the Irish under British rule. Today, British forces in Ireland, including the British Army, Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defense Regiment, number 30,000. These British occupation forces saturate a small area whose total population is approximately 1.5 million. Britain has divided the people of the six counties by a carefully fostered system of religious discrimination in employment, housing and political power. These divisions ensure that the weight of British occupation forces will be doubly visited upon Catholics of the region, who are presumed to be Nationalist - politically opposed to the British.
4. British occupation forces and pro-British Loyalist paramilitaries have callously murdered hundreds of innocent Irish civilians. (Indeed, the figures published by Garret FitzGerald's New Ireland Forum place the figure at eight hundred and seventy five.) Most of these were not even political activists. An international tribunal including representatives from the British and Irish Council of Civil Liberties are currently investigating numerous instances wherein British forces acting as death squads summarily executed unarmed Irish people. An important feature of the tribunal's investigation is the manner in which the judicial system has been harnessed to shield those guilty from legal redress.
5. It is one thing to consider such murders from the vantage point of Congress, three thousand miles removed from Ireland. It is another to view such murders from the perspective of Garret FitzGerald, carefully distanced by partition and his place within the twenty-six county establishment. It is quite a

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- different matter to view such murders, as friends or relatives of the victims and as part of the community against whom such actions are part of a strategy of British terrorism.
6. British forces daily conduct gunpoint interrogations of Irish people on Irish streets and conduct thousands of gunpoint invasions of Irish homes. The targets of such encounters are generally taunted by the British about those who have been murdered during similar encounters.
7. Under British law, terrorism is defined as the use of violence to instill fear for political purposes. The reality is that the British Army, Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defense Regiment are terrorists systematically inflicting violence to instill fear for the political purpose of enforcing submission to British rule.
8. British Army terrorism is coupled with sham legal procedures. Interrogation without charge is permitted for up to seven days. Brutality has been used to extract confessions. Juries have been abolished and the verdict is rendered by a judge who is a prominent member of the British establishment, prepared to impose long terms of imprisonment on little or no evidence. Most recently, when the outcry about torture to extract confessions grew too strong, the British resorted to show trials. One individual, accused of an offense, is given immunity in exchange for evidence against as many as thirty people. There is no corroboration of such testimony, which would immediately be dismissed under American law. In several cases, people have agreed to be informers, then reversed themselves and admitted that they had been offered money and bribes for perjured testimony against individuals suggested by the British. For example, Robert Lean last autumn escaped from British custody and admitted that he had been given scripts setting forth perjury about people he had never met. Still, such testimony is sufficient for convictions and sentences such as those in the infamous Christopher Black case wherein 30 people were sentenced to a total of 4,000 years.
9. These sham legal procedures have made the British legal system for northeast Ireland a virtual conveyor belt for the disposal of Irish Nationalists, rather than a guarantor of justice.
10. Torture in the infamous H-Blocks of Long Kesh led to the hunger strike deaths of ten heroic Irish patriots in 1981. Brutal strip searches in Armagh Women's Prison are conducted to exert psychological and physical torture upon Republican prisoners there.
11. Religious discrimination is also an inherent part of British rule. Unemployment among Catholics is more than double the rate of unemployment for Loyalists. Legislation such as the Fair Employment Act is passed for cosmetic purposes in Westminster and America, with the reality of sectarian discrimination undisturbed. Discrimination in housing is also implemented. And the poverty, arising from the area being one of the poorest in Western Europe, is again doubly visited upon Nationalists.

12. These elements are not accidents of history. Ireland was always one nation even under British administration, until divided by a Government of Ireland Act passed in 1920. It was a response to the 1918 British general election in which more than three-fourths of Irish voters had voted for a free and independent Ireland. Partition was only enforced by violence.
13. The six-county area consisted of two-thirds of Ulster. It was simply the largest area that the British could hold. Moreover, the allegiance of part of the population was based upon the practice of sectarianism, wherein Loyalists supported British rule solely in exchange for an ascendancy status in employment, housing and political patronage. Sectarianism is therefore basic to the system of British rule. It is sectarianism which has prevented reconciliation between different religious groupings in the North. So long as British forces prop up Loyalists in an above-equal status, Loyalists will oppose a diminution of such status and a position of equality in a united Ireland.
14. One could catalog the outrages inflicted by the British in order to perpetuate British rule indefinitely. Suffice it to say that foreign rule of any sort would be unacceptable to the people of Ireland. Yet, British rule with its basis in military occupation and British Army terrorism, economic exploitation, religious discrimination and torture, is simply intolerable.
15. The nature of British rule has led inevitably to armed resistance against British occupation troops. It is a resistance which began nearly fourteen years ago when peaceful civil rights marches and demands for an end to religious discrimination in voting, employment and housing were brutally attacked by Loyalists and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, followed by the re-introduction of British troops with internment without charges or trial, the torture of internees and murder of civil rights marchers on Bloody Sunday.
16. Today, the struggle for Irish freedom continues. Sinn Féin believes that so long as British rule exists in Ireland, the inherent evils of sectarianism, British Army terrorism and torture will continue. Sinn Féin therefore supports the right of the Irish Republican Army to struggle to end British occupation and to establish the conditions for peace, freedom and religious equality for all of the people of Ireland.
17. Sinn Féin seeks an irrevocable declaration of intent by the British government to withdraw at a specified time from Irish soil, coupled with formal recognition of Irish national self-determination and immediate amnesty for all Irish political prisoners. Such a solution would remove the British prop for sectarianism in Ireland and allow an interim period for all Irish people to establish a national government based upon the interests of the Irish people rather than British colonial interests. Only such a thirty-two county Irish nation can guarantee religious equality and human rights for all and only such a society can provide the conditions of peace.
18. The role of the Dublin government, as symbolized by Garret FitzGerald, has been a tragic one. In the interim period of nearly half a century between the imposition of partition and the outset of the present conflict, the

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Dublin government did little more than pay lip service to our plight. With the Loyalist attacks on civil rights marchers and the resulting period of national struggle, even that ceased. The Irish Free State abandoned the people of the North, even though its own constitution recognizes the national territory to be the entire island of Ireland. Indeed, the Dublin government began to collaborate with the British by imprisoning Irish Republicans in Portlaoise and by sending forces to help close the border to Irish Freedom Fighters.

19. The basis of this policy of national betrayal is obvious. The Irish Free State politicians have distanced and detached themselves from fellow Irish citizens. Their primary concern is their political place within the establishment and the economic interests they represent. Re-unification simply meant additional problems, the uncertain prospects of election in a 32-county nation, and a social revolution designed to end British economic imperialism. The sufferings of Irish people in the North became a price that the Free State establishment was willing to pay.
20. The Forum is an extension of this attitude. The Forum began by excluding Sinn Féin, whose five elected representatives to the Assembly should have been entitled to participation. Sinn Féin would have participated. We were excluded ostensibly because we support the right of the Irish people to engage in armed struggle against the British. This was described as "not renouncing violence". Loyalists such as former Ulster Defense Regiment Major Ken Maginnis, Ian Paisley - founder of the "Third Force" - and others who support British violence against Irish people were deemed acceptable. Sinn Féin was in reality excluded because it would have put forward a principled demand for Irish national freedom and exposed the reality of continued British rule under proposed solutions such as joint sovereignty or confederation.
21. There has been, of course, an adamant stance taken by the British and Loyalists that the Forum will not lead to any change of status for the six counties. No Loyalist politicians have even participated. The Forum therefore can contribute nothing to the cause of peace in Ireland, save to contribute the cosmetic appearance of movement where none in fact exists.
22. Today, Garret Fitzgerald stands in the United States. He attacks not the British, whose 30,000 occupation forces impose hegemony on Irish soil, and who foster sectarianism. Instead, he attacks one of the strongest allies of the Irish people - Irish-Americans. Irish-Americans, through their financial support to Irish political prisoners and moral support for an end to British rule, have immeasurably advanced the cause of national freedom in Ireland.
23. He misrepresents the Republican Movement. He will claim that we have no support, although 103,000 Nationalists voted for us in the most recent elections, and Sinn Féin is clearly emerging as the leading political party for Irish Nationalists in the North.

24. He will claim that we are Marxist-Leninists, although Sinn Fein is adamant in its rejection of the Warsaw Pact or a Soviet alliance, as we would adamantly object to an Irish involvement with NATO. Sinn Fein believes in a democratic social system, designed to undo British economic controls and promote the economic interests of the Irish people. Radical reform along socialist lines is necessary to accomplish this goal, but we support a democratic, social and economic system consistent with historic Irish traditions. We reject a state-dominated Marxist-Leninist model.
25. Thirdly, Sinn Féin does not wish to take over the Irish Free State by armed struggle. The Irish Republican Army has stated that it is fighting to secure a British withdrawal. Once that withdrawal is secured, and democracy restored, then the society which emerges is a matter for the Irish people working as one national unit.
26. Fourthly, Sinn Féin is not sectarian. We wish a nation which can guarantee full civil and religious liberty for all Irish people regardless of religious or other differences.
27. America is a land established through armed resistance to the British. America's founders supported liberty and religious equality for all. Today, Irish people in the British-held colony of Ireland fight for national freedom and religious equality. Today, as Irish people suffer under British colonial rule imposed by British Army terrorism, Garret FitzGerald stands before you and serves as a pro-British apologist, defending his vested interests within the Irish Free State establishment rather than his country's. It is a tragic spectacle which angers, and engenders more support from, all who truly wish peace and national freedom for all of the people of Ireland.