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20 November, 1992

Mr. John Kelly,  
The Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign,  
1 West End Park,  
Derry, BT48 9JF.

Dear Mr. Kelly,

The Taoiseach, Mr. Albert Reynolds, has asked me to refer to your recent letters concerning the establishment of the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign.

The Government have consistently maintained that those killed in Derry on Bloody Sunday were engaged in peaceful protest and were not involved in violence. This was made clear in the immediate aftermath of the tragic events of 30 January, 1972, when the Government vigorously protested to the British Government about the actions of the security forces. The Government also took steps to bring the Bloody Sunday killings before the European Commission of Human Rights in the context of the inter-State cases which the Government brought against the United Kingdom in 1970s. The already widely-held belief in the innocence of those who lost their lives has only been reinforced by recent television and radio reports on the matter.

The Government are mindful of the widespread and deeply felt criticism of the report of the Widgery Tribunal, and appreciate the dissatisfaction felt by the bereaved families at the report's conclusions and their wish that the remedial action be taken. The Government would welcome any moves by the British Government, even at this late stage, which would respond to the legitimate preoccupations of the relatives and friends of those who were killed and injured.

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The Government have followed with concern the events of Bloody Sunday and its aftermath. Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement the Government have consistently impressed on the British Government the urgency of reforms and safeguards which will preclude the possibility of any recurrence.

The Taoiseach regrets, owing to his schedule of commitments at present, that it is not possible to accede to your request for a meeting, but he is grateful to you for bringing this matter to his attention.

Yours sincerely,

DONAGH MORGAN.

Private Secretary  
to the Taoiseach

# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

TO: Pat O'Sullivan  
FROM: Gerry Cribbin

*Mr. Keenan  
Revised draft on basis of D/A material  
received on 6/11/42 submitted.  
9/11/42*

*Private Secretary @*

*Draft letter  
which is  
recommended*

**RE: Request from The Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign  
for a meeting with the Taoiseach**

*h.k.i.  
9.11.92*

1. The above Group, which mainly comprises the relatives of the 14 victims of the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry, wrote to the Taoiseach in May and again in September seeking a meeting with him to gain Government support for their campaign which has the following three objectives:
  - The British Government must publicly acknowledge the innocence of those killed and injured;
  - The British Government must publicly repudiate the Widgery report;
  - Those responsible for the killings and injuries must be prosecuted.
  
2. In a Dáil Adjournment Debate in February and in a letter issued by the Taoiseach to the Bloody Sunday Initiative in March, the Government welcomed motions put down in the House of Commons for a re-opening of the Widgery Tribunal. In early March, however, Mr. John Major decided not to review the findings of the Tribunal. In a letter to the Labour M.P., Mr. Harry Barnes (copy attached), Mr. Major said that the British Government "does not think it would be right to review

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or reopen the Widgery Tribunal". His letter continued that on certain critical events, Widgery was confronted with wholly conflicting evidence. Mr. Major in his letter said that "it is very likely that a review or new inquiry would face very much the same difficulty". Since then, the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign has established a research unit to prepare a potential prosecution case. The group has already collected over 600 statements and is appealing for other witnesses to come forward. Representatives recently held meetings with Protestant church leaders in Derry and also addressed the City Council. The Group insists that it is apolitical. In an 'Irish News' article on 16 October, Sinn Féin councillor Hugh Brady said that while his party supported the aims of the Bloody Sunday group, there was no connection between the two. It should be noted that the Group criticised the President over her refusal to meet with representatives during her September visit to Derry. A statement from Aras an Uachtaran said that the reason for the decision was "because the campaign clearly involves matters of policy" though no such representation was received in either this Department or Foreign Affairs. Mr. John Kelly of the Group described the President's refusal as showing "inexcusable insensitivity" particularly when viewed in the context of her having laid a wreath at the Cenotaph to the victims of the Enniskillen bombings.

3. Without prejudice to the legitimacy and sincerity of the Group's objectives, the Taoiseach should decline the request for a meeting. The likely publicity would not be helpful to the Talks process, especially at this particularly sensitive stage where some Unionist and Sinn Féin politicians would have a vested interest in misinterpretation. Furthermore, it

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would not be unreasonable if the British took the view that any desire by the Irish Government to resurrect the Widgery Tribunal should most appropriately be raised in a confidential manner under the mechanisms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It should also be noted that John Major said in his letter that "we know of no precedent for the re-examination of evidence presented to such a Tribunal". In effect, this would seem to represent the British Government's final word on the matter.

4. Draft reply across for consideration please.

*Jeremy Giblin*

3 November, 1992