



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/47/85

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.



OIFIG AN TÁNAISTE AGUS AN AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
OFFICE OF THE TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

24 May, 1993

Mr. Martin Finucane
Relatives for Justice
1 Westend Park
Derry BT48 9JF

Dear Mr. Finucane,


I refer to your letter of 7 May concerning the Nelson affair.

At the outset, allow me to clarify one point. It was the understanding of my Department, from Fr. Raymond Murray, who is associated with your group, that you and your colleagues in Relatives for Justice wished a meeting with the Department to discuss the Nelson affair and other issues of concern, such as the use of lethal force by the security forces in Northern Ireland. Indeed he wrote to me on the matter and I responded to him on 5 March. In my response I indicated that while my schedule was very full, I was happy to have my officials meet Relatives for Justice. That offer remains open.

As regards the Nelson affair, the Government have made clear to the British authorities within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement their deep concern with regard to a range of issues which this affair has highlighted and which raised very important questions with regard to the subordination of the security forces to the rule of law in Northern Ireland. The Government have left the British authorities under no illusion about the seriousness with which we view the matters in question, many of which are referred to in your letter, and we have stressed, and the British authorities accept, that there must never be a recurrence.

For their part, the British Government have agreed that all elements of the security forces must operate within the rule of law. They have informed us that they have instituted an investigation into controls and safeguards over intelligence activities to ensure that they are adequate and have stated clearly that there will be no repetition of the illegal activities brought to light by the Nelson affair.*

For our part, we will continue, using the channels provided under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to emphasise to the British authorities the absolute unacceptability of the practices which this case revealed and the necessity to ensure that the security forces at all times act within the law and, most important, are held accountable for their actions.



I hope that you find this helpful. As I have already indicated, my officials remain available to meet with representatives of Relatives for Justice to discuss matters of concern to them.

Yours sincerely

DICK SPRING T.D.

Dick Spring T. D.
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs