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PRESS RELEASE

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RUC ATTACK ON PEACEFUL PROTEST.

Lower Ormeau Concerned Community condemns the RUCs tactics during and after a provocative Orange March on the Ormeau Road on Sunday 30th October 1994.

It was clear from very early on that the RUC intended to try and provoke residents during their peaceful protest. Several officers were abusive and intimidatory. Indeed the whole RUC operation seems to have had the deliberate intention of intimidating residents of the area into not protesting.

Even before the parade returned at 5.00pm a senior RUC officer, Inspector Robinson, set the tone by assaulting a local resident and only stopped when he realised he had been recognised. During both legs of the march one of the bandmen was observed with a video camera taking shots of the protesters, when a resident went forward to point this out to a RUC officer he was set upon and arrested. What followed was, quite simply, an attempt by the RUC to beat local residents off the streets in scenes reminiscent of Derry in October 1968.

In the ensuing fracas, women and children as well as local men were punched and kicked by the RUC. Three further local men were also arrested.

Once again the first reaction of the RUC was to try to cover up their misdeeds by shifting the blame onto the people of the Lower Ormeau. The simple fact is the RUC are directly responsible along with the Orange Order for Sunday nights incident. The Orange Order planned the route and the RUC approved and arranged to police it. Their tactics on the day were heavy-handed and intimidatory and were totally out of all proportion to the situation. What is worse it would appear that senior officers on the scene lost control.

For many years now the LOCC has demanded that these marches be rerouted away from this 100% nationalist area and we again make that demand there is absolutely no reason or excuse for these marches to take this highly provocative route and no reason for the RUC to allow it to go ahead even if the Orange Order insists.

Despite the fact that we have been refused justice on a number of previous occasions we are again considering seeking a judicial review of future decisions to allow these marches along this route. We will also be asking that the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation look at the issue of Orange Marches in Nationalist areas with some urgency.

It is now almost three years since the massacre in Sean Grahams Bookmakers in which the UFF took 5 innocent lives and which sparked the campaign to have these marches rerouted. Three years in which the people of the Lower Ormeau have been forced to endure more than 30 marches planned by the Orange Order and allowed by the RUC. Three years during which the people of this area have been vilified and slandered by politicians and police alike. It has been three years too long, these marches should have stopped immediately after the bookies massacre, they should stop now.