

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Attn Ciara O' Brien.

As Discussed

9/5

Statement by the Taoiseach
Mr. John Bruton T.D.

I want to extend my sympathy to the family and friends of Mr. Robert Hamill who died yesterday as a result of a brutal attack.

I condemn this senseless act of sectarian violence. Those responsible must be pursued with the full extent of the law and brought to justice.

The circumstances surrounding Mr. Hamill's death give cause for great concern and were promptly raised with the British authorities. The issue was again raised this morning with the British authorities in the light of his tragic death.

The full circumstances must be established beyond doubt, in a transparent way that will command the full confidence of the entire community.

Friday 9 May, 1997

ENDS

N-oc Box 1150

PST, PSS
S/S Ó hUiginn
Counsellors A-I Section
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CONFIDENTIAL

(2)

NOTE TO THE IRISH SIDE

INCIDENT IN PORTADOWN ON 27 APRIL RESULTING IN DEATH OF ROBERT HAMILL

The Irish side had expressed concern at last week's delegation meeting about the lack of police intervention during the assault by a loyalist mob on Mr Robert Hamill in Portadown on 27 April 1997. The Irish side also handed over a note this morning following the death of Mr Hamill from the injuries sustained during the incident. The latest information is as follows.

Background

2. At 1.45am on 27 April 1997 rival gangs confronted each other in the Market Street and Thomas Street area of Portadown. The groups threw bottles at each other and when police arrived to separate them, they also were attacked. One group was reported to consist of approximately 8-10 Roman Catholics and the other between 30-50 Protestants. The police restored order at around 3.00am. Two persons were reported to have sustained injuries during the incident.

Further Details

3. Further details from the police have now been received. A police landrover crew in Portadown town centre was alerted to the disturbance and on arrival at the scene immediately intervened to regain order. The numbers involved in the confrontation were such that the RUC officers were unable to contain the situation and came under attack themselves. Police reinforcements were called and on arrival were able to assist in restoring order. The police issued a statement along these lines at the time, in response to allegations that they had not attempted to prevent this assault.

4. One of those injured in the incident was taken to hospital and died last night in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast as a result of the injuries he received. The man who died was Robert Hamill, aged 25, from Obins Avenue, Portadown. He had two children and his girlfriend is expecting their third child in July.

5. Various newspaper reports have claimed that Mr Hamill was 'danced on' by the crowd and savagely beaten because he was a Roman Catholic and that this incident was the product of a vicious cycle of sectarian hatred.

Murder Inquiry

6. A special team had been set up to investigate the incident and a number of people have already been interviewed. The RUC have confirmed that they have now begun a murder inquiry and renewed their appeal for witnesses to the incident.

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Current Position

7. As a result of police enquiries a number of people have been arrested, and the police are awaiting results of forensic tests carried out in connection with this incident. The Chief Constabe has asked the ICPC to supervise the investigation.

R Osborne

RUTH OSBORNE
9 May 1997

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Note to the British side

Death of Robert Hamill

1. We previously raised with you the case of Robert Hamill who was savagely beaten, allegedly by a Loyalist gang, in Portadown in the early hours of 27 April.

2. Following representations, we expressed concern that, notwithstanding that there had been an armoured police tender parked near the scene of the attack, and that there was an RUC station nearby from which reinforcements could have been summoned as required, the RUC had not allegedly come to Mr Hamill's aid. Neither, it is claimed, was any action taken to disperse the Loyalist mob.

3. Mr Hamill died yesterday in hospital and it is reported in the media that the RUC have launched a murder investigation in the matter.

4. We would see it as very important that an investigation into the alleged failure of the RUC to come to Mr Hamill's assistance, or indeed even to render him any first aid prior to the ambulance arriving, should be conducted and brought to conclusion as a matter of urgency. According to reports, the police officers remained in the tender and, beyond allegedly not coming to Mr Hamill's assistance, did not, it is claimed, take any action aimed at dispersing the Loyalist mob.

5. Mr Hamill's death has considerably raised tensions in the community (his family, it has been reported, has called for an independent inquiry into his killing). Prompt and thorough action in regard to investigating alleged police inactivity in the case will help to reduce that tension.

6. We would welcome an early response.

Kieran Dowling
9 May 1997

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