

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/52/550
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.

NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

19 August 1998

MO MOWLAM WELCOMES IRISH CRACKDOWN ON TERRORISM: GOVERNMENT LOOKING ACTIVELY AT TIGHTENING OF LAW ON MEMBERSHIP OF TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP, today welcomed decisions by the Irish Government to strengthen their anti-terrorist laws, and said that the Government is considering steps to make it easier to convict terrorists for membership of a proscribed organisation.

In a statement today, Dr Mowlam said:

"After Saturday's appalling atrocity in Omagh, we must be sure that everything possible is being done, not only to bring those responsible to book, but to prevent such awful events happening again.

I warmly welcome the steps the Irish Cabinet decided to take today. Almost all of these introduce into Irish law provisions which are already included in our own anti-terrorist legislation. Taken together with the steps which the Chief Constable and the Garda Commissioner are taking to enhance further operational capabilities in border areas, which I announced on Monday following my meeting with the Irish Minister of Justice, this means that we now have the strongest ever anti-terrorist measures across the whole of the island.

Our own legal framework already provides extensive powers. I am looking actively at ways of further strengthening them. In particular, it is at present difficult to secure convictions for the offence of membership of a proscribed organisation, such as the Real

Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3ST. Telephone (01232) 520700. Fax (01232) 528473/528478/528482
11 Millbank, London SW1P 4QE. Telephone 0171-210-3000 Fax 0171-210-0254/0249
Website: http://www.nio.gov.uk

©NAI/DFA/2021/52/550

IRA which has admitted to Saturday's bombing. I am therefore considering changes similar to those which the Irish Government have announced today to make it easier to prove membership. The details are still being worked out, as they are with the Irish, but I hope we can move quickly.

Membership of a proscribed organisation is already a serious offence. What we would do is make it easier for prosecutions for that offence to succeed. Conviction is punishable by imprisonment.

The police are continuing their efforts to bring the perpetrators of the Omagh bombing to justice, including using expert assistance from the Metropolitan Police. I know that they will not rest until they have done so, and that they will ensure that there is no hiding place for those who are still intent on violence."

©NAI/DFA/2021/52/550