

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Statement by the Taoiseach
Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D.
to the media
following a wreath laying ceremony in Derry
at the memorial to the victims of Bloody Sunday

Bloody Sunday was a terrible tragedy for the people of Derry and for the people of Ireland.

The relatives and friends of the victims shot dead on that day have had to live not just with the grief of their loss, but with a tremendous sense of injustice. I commend them for their efforts over all these years to establish the full truth of what happened on that day.

The then Irish Government - with my full support - presented its assessment of the new material on Bloody Sunday to the British Government in June 1997.

I have consistently raised the issue of Bloody Sunday with the British Prime Minister. The Widgery Report compounded the tragedy. It must be replaced with a clear, balanced and truthful account of the events on that day. This is needed not in any spirit of recrimination, but simply as a matter of justice.

I believe that the best way to do this is to produce a new report based on a new independent inquiry.

I look forward to an early response from the British Government to the Irish Government's assessment.

23 January 1998

ENDS

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Remarks by the Taoiseach Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D.
at the Locking of the Time Capsule, Ráth Mór Centre,
Creggan, Derry, Friday, 23 January 1998 at 10:15am

- I appreciate the warm welcome. I'm here because I want to acknowledge the tremendous achievements of the Creggan community over the past 10 years. Creggan has been pivotal in the events of the past thirty years, since the people of this city and of the North embarked on the struggle for civil rights for nationalists and recognition of their Irish identity. The people here have shown endurance and resilience, often in the face of adversity and challenge.

- I'm very impressed at the range of events and activities you had for your 50th Anniversary, last year. I believe there were nearly 200 events - and looking at the programme, the range was truly impressive.

- You have shown how much there is to celebrate. You have made clear just how much talent, creativity and enterprise there is in the Creggan. But you have done more than that. You have harnessed and channelled those talents to best effect.

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- What you have achieved is more than an exercise in community development - and an impressive one at that - it is also a shining example to others on what can be done with the right motivation and organisation.

- I'm delighted too that as a result of the Festival's huge success you've decided to have an annual event from now on. I wish you every success with Féile an Chreagáin. I have no doubt that drawing on the energy and commitment of the local community which was so evident during Creggan 50 that the annual Féilte will be just as successful.

- I know that 1997 was a year of mixed blessings here in the Creggan. The loss of 600 jobs at UTA (United Technologies Automotive) was a heavy blow. I am aware of the efforts being made by Creggan Enterprises Ltd. to lessen the impact of this setback and to develop the local economy - specifically the plans they are proposing to regenerate the area by developing new facilities at the UTA site. I want to add my voice of support to Creggan Enterprises Ltd. in their endeavours. I would ask all concerned to give them a fair hearing for their proposals - which I hope will be successful.

- I applaud all that you have already achieved by working together. You have done a huge amount to make a better Creggan. I want to see Creggan go further and I want a better life for the people of Creggan. The best way to make that happen is to ensure an end to

the conflict and the promotion of full equality and justice for all here in Northern Ireland. That's precisely what I'm working to achieve. You deserve nothing less.

- You also have the right to life and to live in peace. The past few days have seen a grim tally of sectarian killings. These must stop. Catholic lives are not expendable; no more are those of Protestants!

- The settlement of the conflict here in Northern Ireland must be one that will have widespread support and that can, thus be sustained. It has to be a fair and balanced accommodation of the legitimate concerns of all - so that it represents a win-win situation for all and is clearly seen as such.

- I know that the people of Creggan identify themselves as Irish, and identify with Ireland and everything Irish. This is why there cannot be any purely internal settlement. In working forward from the Framework Document and the recent Propositions paper, I and my Government are determined that there will be a meaningful North - South Council both to provide institutional expression for your nationalist identity and to provide a framework for practical common action on an all-island basis, where this makes economic sense, as envisaged in the Framework Document. Without satisfactory provisions in this area, Strand Two as it is called, there will be no agreement.

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- But to get an agreement, we have to press on with and persevere in the negotiations. They hold out the hope of a future that the path of violence can never achieve, indeed can only destroy.

- Rest assured that I will ensure that any proposed settlement will fully take account of the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Nationalist community here - because Nationalists cannot, will not, ever again, be second class citizens and because only a balanced settlement can be successful.

- I am honoured that you have asked me to contribute to your time capsule and that you have asked me to seal it for you now until the year 2047.

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- Ends.