

EMBARGO UNTIL 11.00 a.m. HOLIDAY 20TH NOVEMBER, 1972

A group of priests working in Belfast have issued the following statement:

1. We are Catholic priests working in Belfast. We have condemned violence in the past when it was carried out by private citizens. We cannot now remain silent in the face of the violence now being used by the British Army, particularly in the poorer Catholic areas.
2. No military victory could justify this campaign of attacking a civilian population. Innocent and unarmed civilians, regardless of sex or age, are being shot by soldiers who are in and out of uniform. Homes are raided over and over again at all hours of the day and night. People are arrested daily in their homes, places of work, social clubs and on the streets. Many of those arrested are subjected to beatings and inhuman and degrading treatment. The campaign affects all the people in areas saturated by the Army. They suffer from curfews, interrupted sleep, inability to get to work and loss of recreational facilities. The consequent damage to family life is intolerable.
3. This campaign of violence by the regular army becomes all the more intolerable when it is claimed that there are not enough soldiers to protect the population in other parts of the city from murder gangs. The Army must be made to recognize that its first duty is to protect ALL innocent lives.
4. Redress for these injustices has been refused even when full details have been given of military violence against people who have no involvement in any political movement. Indeed, if they were so involved, they ought not to be treated in such a way. People in the depressed areas of Belfast feel bereft of the protection of the law.
5. It is our determination to do everything in our power to help the poor people who, without the benefit of the vast resources of propaganda available to the Army and the British Government, feel helpless in the face of the violence being used against them. It is a charge on our conscience to relieve them of this burden. We intend to make known, in every place in which we can do so, the consequences of this campaign, and especially in those countries which are soon to be our partners in the Common Market. We believe that the truth of what is happening must be told. We also propose immediately to organize direct non-violent action in the worst affected areas and to be present in some numbers with the suffering people.
6. Violence by private citizens which takes away human rights, is immoral. Violence is no less abominable when it is carried out by the Forces under the control of the Government. We cannot be expected to be silent in the face of either.

(Paragraph numbers omitted in original)