

30.5.7

Frank Maguire Esq MP
Main Street
LISNASKEA
Co Fermanagh

17 June 1980

..... You wrote to the Secretary of State on 28 May enclosing the attached statement from the relatives of the women prisoners at Armagh who are protesting against the refusal of special category status.

I have written to you on a number of occasions answering these familiar allegations about the protest action at Armagh. I do not think it serves any useful purpose for me to go over the ground again. I would only say, as I have before, that there is no foundation for the claim that the women were "forced" on to their dirty protest.

I note that the demands set out in the statement are identical with those of Provisional Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA. We have repeatedly made it clear that the Government has no intention of giving way to such demands nor of restoring any form of special category status for particular groups of sentenced prisoners; but we shall continue to run a prison regime which is as fair and humane as possible to all prisoners, including those who are taking part in the current protest.

cc PS/sgs (k)
PS/Mr Alison (k)

MICHAEL ALISON