



Ara Coeli  
Ard Mhacha/Armagh



13th July, 1984.

Dear Secretary of State,

It has come to my notice that the nineteen prisoners in the Maze Prison who unsuccessfully attempted a jailbreak in 1983 are still being restricted to 'closed' visits on the part of relatives and friends. This means, I understand, that wives, children, parents and other family relations may speak to them only through a glass partition and have no opportunity to touch, embrace or exchange the normal signs of affection.

I am seriously worried about the present position for the following reasons:

1. It is imposing a heavy punishment on the innocent relatives of these prisoners;
2. It adds to the already heavy strain imposed on marriages and family life through the absence of husbands and fathers;
3. It is increasing considerably the sense of frustration felt by these prisoners and their colleagues in the jail, thus making it easy to extend dissatisfaction within the jail and to worsen relations between prisoners and prison staff. In fact I understand that some of these prisoners now refuse to accept any visitors and that this is liable to spread.

I believe therefore that, on humanitarian and pastoral grounds alone, the present system of 'closed visits' for the above-mentioned group of prisoners should be speedily brought to an end.

*Hoping you can use your good offices in the above matter and with all good wishes.*

*Yours very sincerely,  
+ Tomás Ó'Flaigh*

Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh

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