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Leaders hail cross-party 'unity' as rallies held

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FRANK MILLAR, London Editor

HOUSE OF COMMONS: PRIME MINISTER Gordon Brown and Conservative leader David Cameron led MPs in a show of solidarity yesterday with the wave of public protests across Northern Ireland against the dissident republican murders of army sappers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar and PSNI Constable Stephen Carroll.

MPs held their own gathering in support of the peace rallies after Mr Brown and Mr Cameron hailed cross-party "unity" in Northern Ireland in support of the police investigation into the murders and in common determination that the dissidents should not be allowed to destroy the peace process.

Mr Brown told the House of Commons he saw at first hand in Belfast on Monday "the unity against violence of the people and their representatives . . . and the unyielding resolution to say with one voice that the peace that the people of Northern Ireland are building no murderers should ever be allowed to destroy".

Mr Brown was responding to Mr Cameron – making his first appearance in the chamber since the death of his son – who said this unity was remarkable, as it was "remarkably welcome that every party in Northern Ireland, including individuals who were themselves once bombers and terrorists, are calling on people to co-operate with the police".

There was a reminder of underlying and unresolved disputes about policing, army back-up and the "operational independence" of the PSNI Chief Constable, however, when Upper Bann DUP MP David Simpson pressed for the assurance that Sir Hugh Orde would have whatever resources he needed in countering the dissident threat.

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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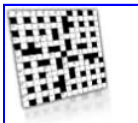
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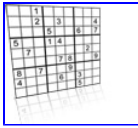
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