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"Chaplain's caution should be heeded by British MoD" - McCann

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West Belfast Sinn Fein MLA Jennifer McCann has called on the British Ministry of Defence to take heed of the comments of the RIR chaplain, Reverend David Latimer, that a British army parade in Belfast city centre is not a good idea. Reverend Latimer said publicly that he would prefer **'one centrally organised religious service of thanksgiving'** rather than **'rushing into a fanfare of parades and celebration'**.

Ms McCann said:

"The British Defence Minister, John Hutton, and the British Secretary of State, Shaun Woodward should pay attention to what Reverend Latimer has said. As the RIR chaplain, he has expressed his own scepticism about plans for a military march. To his credit, Reverend Latimer clearly realises the divisiveness that the British MoD plans are causing.

Council funding was sought for a civic reception which split Belfast City Council down the middle. After that the British MoD applied to the Parades Commission and falsely claimed that the Council was organising the march. In response, the Council issued a statement making clear : *"The parade has been wholly organised by the MoD and the council's only role is to host a reception after the parade, as approved at last month's council meeting."* (10th October 08)

Reverend Latimer's call for a service correspond with the civic reception and service which is now scheduled to go ahead with Council funding. A similar event was also held recently at St Annes Cathedral for the RUC George Cross Foundation. That was a dignified and non-contentious service.

In contrast, the British MoD plans will turn Belfast city centre into a military showground for the British Army with three different regiments; a saluting stand; a military band; and fighter jets flying overhead. The British Ministry of Defence is acting irresponsibly.

This is the second largest city in Ireland. Either the British MoD has total disregard for the victims of British State violence here or their plans are designed to maximize division."

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