

Ulster Unionist Party

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<http://uup.org/newsrooms/latest-news/general/maze-of-issues-raised-by-bbc-programme.php>

## Maze Of Issues Raised By BBC Programme



Following a BBC documentary on the BBC last night entitled, 'Breakout' the Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Sir Reg Empey has described as, 'chilling' a programme which served to glorify the IRA breakout at the Maze in 1983.

Commenting on the programme, Sir Reg stated: "The BBC documentary on the 1983 IRA 'escape' from the Maze prison was chilling to say the least. Those taking part showed themselves to be scheming and manipulative, without an ounce of remorse for the prison officer murdered as a result of the breakout. This was no Boys Own adventure of daring do. It was a demonstration of a ruthless disregard for the lives and rights of fellow human beings."

"The Maze Prison was no Colditz. The inhabitants were not Prisoners-of-War. They were convicted terrorists, killers and bombers. And this was a glorification of them, their activities and their own propaganda machine."

"It was also the wrong time for this sort of programme and the BBC displayed very poor editorial and commissioning judgment. Northern Ireland is still at a settling-in stage and the very last thing we need is primetime reminders of the past: particularly when it involved Junior Minister Gerry Kelly displaying no remorse or regret for the incident, injuries and consequences."

"It also put the Maze at centre stage at a time when Sinn Fein has been pushing very strongly for part of it to be set aside as some sort of shrine to the IRA. I suspect that after watching this programme, many ordinary people, both from a nationalist and unionist background, would be offended by the idea that the Maze Prison and its convicted prisoners should be the subject of some sort of veneration."

"The programme also has a very serious knock-on effect regards the devolution of Policing and Justice: for if it is an accurate reflection of how republicans truly feel about their terrorist past, it would suggest that Sinn Fein is not yet ready to have a responsible, unbiased approach to Policing and Justice in the near future."