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P. Twan
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From the Private Secretary

17 February 1997

Dear Mr. Adams,

You wrote to the Prime Minister on 31 January and 10 February.

There is a huge credibility gap between what you say in both letters and the actions of the IRA on the ground. Continuing murderous IRA attacks are incompatible with peace and with democracy. If you were serious about peace-making before the election, you would call for an immediate and lasting ceasefire. The Prime Minister hopes you will do so.

The Government has repeatedly made clear its commitment to inclusive negotiations and its desire to see Sinn Fein take its place in such negotiations to represent its electorate. But it is also clear what must be done if that is to happen. The IRA must declare an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire, and actions, words and all the circumstances must be consistent so that the statutory requirements set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules are met before an invitation to Sinn Fein to participate in the negotiations can be issued.

The process which would need to follow a ceasefire declaration, in order to be sure that it was intended to be genuinely unequivocal, was set out in the Government's statement of 28 November. That explained clearly the criteria that would be applied. The Government will not depart from that position; nor will it negotiate the restoration of a ceasefire which should not have been ended. Naturally if there remains any genuine uncertainty about the Government's position, that can be addressed.

The Government have made clear, since the IRA abandoned its ceasefire a year ago, that any meeting between Sinn Fein and Government officials was subject to events on the ground. IRA's actions on the ground rule out any meeting with officials at present.

Yours sincerely
John Holmes

JOHN HOLMES

Mr Gerry Adams

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