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Northern Ireland Office

Press Notice

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Stormont Castle, Belfast
17 January 1975

NIO/1/9

Statement by the Secretary of State, Mr Merlyn Rees MP

I share the feeling of outrage and disappointment of the people of Northern Ireland that the Provisional IRA have today shown a total lack of concern for the people's clear call for an end to violence.

The British Government's position was clearly and explicitly set out in my statement in Parliament on 14 January. I said that the Government's response to "a genuine and sustained cessation of violence" would be that the Army could be "reduced to a peace-time level". I also said that I would feel able to "speed up the rate of releases with a view to releasing all detainees".

I will not be influenced by any views which are backed with threats of the bomb and bullet. But as I said in Parliament on 14 January the Provisional Sinn Fein are "free to take part in genuine political activity within the law" and to give their view to my officials. This remains the case.

I emphasised on that occasion as on previous occasions that many things would be possible if the cessation of violence was both genuine and sustained. Meanwhile "it is my duty to ensure that the Security Forces are ready at all times to deal resolutely with any resumption of violence". They have not lowered their guard. I said on 20 December that "the actions of the Security Forces will be related to the level of any activity which may occur". The Security Forces have done neither more nor less.

Note: This statement was telephoned to offices last night (16 January).