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**SECRETARY OF STATE'S PRESS CONFERENCE AT CASTLE
BUILDINGS ON 20 FEBRUARY 1998**

SECRETARY OF STATE

Good afternoon, the two Governments have now reached a joint decision as you now know. After the most careful examination of all the material available to us, we have been obliged to conclude that the representations under Rule 29 are upheld and that Sinn Fein should not be allowed to participate in the Talks. We have just met Sinn Fein to convey our decision personally to them. It is being made available to all other participants in the Talks and is being published. Great care has been taken by the Governments in arriving at their conclusions. Against the background of the three day session of the Talks in Dublin Castle this week which allowed all parties including Sinn Fein, the opportunity to state their views in full. The Government wishes to ensure that the fullest possible consideration was given to those

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views and to all the issues and factors involved. There is little time left now, until May, both Governments are determined to work with the parties to produce a settlement over the coming six weeks. We want as many parties as possible, including Sinn Fein to have the opportunity to contribute during the critical period. Subject crucially to events on the ground and to convincing demonstration in word indeed that a complete unqualified and unequivocal IRA cease-fire is being fully and continuously observed. It is the expectation of both Governments that Sinn Fein will be able to return to the Talks on the 9 March. We will maintain contacts with Sinn Fein in the meantime. In the case of the UDP and now in the case of Sinn Fein the Governments have been prepared in the interests of inclusively and rapid progress in the Talks to envisage a return to the Talks at an early stage. However, and I stress this approach could certainly not be

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maintained in the event of further violence by the organisations linked to these parties. The creditability of the process could not withstand such a further challenge. All parties should have no doubt about the two Governments resolved in such circumstances. In view of the nature of the procedures, under which the Governments have made their determination on the case of Sinn Fein, the whole legal aspect, that we do not propose to comment further on the actual detail of the outcome, but will answer a couple of questions.

DAVID ANDREWS

Yes, of course I join with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in that particular statement that she has mentioned. I have been stressing for months that this is a process which has to be advance much more quickly, to be in effect fast forwarded the two Governments have now made it clear in paragraph 22 there, strong determination to work with the parties to produce a

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settlement in the coming six weeks. This is the big prize, and we must all keep our eyes firmly fixed on it. There is a historic settlement in sight, if we all show the commitment, the determination and the flexibility necessary. And I want and I note that the Secretary of State want the settlement to be as fully inclusive as possible. As the Secretary of State has said in her opening joint statement, we have heard that the evidence over a very difficult three days in Dublin Castle from Monday, Tuesday to Wednesday at 4.00 pm, since that time to a number of hours ago we have been giving very serious consideration to the views of all the parties including Sinn Fein during the currency of the three days, and this as I say is our determination. I think that its a fair and balanced decision, as I say we are on the verge of a historic decision and we should now look to the future. In that regard, it doesn't give me or it doesn't give Mo Mowlam any

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pleasure to ask one or any of the parties to leave the Talks for a short period of time. Nevertheless, I would like again to pay tribute to the leadership of Sinn Fein in the Talks process. I think that they have made a very valuable and determined contribution to the process itself and I look forward after the 9 March to their return, as I look forward to the return of the UDP, thankyou.

MEDIA

How's time measured, Secretary of State against a certain alleged acts of surprises from outside the time the parties are put out for....???????

SECRETARY OF STATE

Well, let us be clear in the context, the context is the Mitchell Principles, Mitchell Principles have been demonstrably dishonoured, therefore Sinn Fein are no longer entitled to take part in these Talks. We only, as David has just said got six weeks to get an accommodation and so the UDP and Sinn Fein returning at

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an earlier stage. It is in that context that we have looked at the time limit. There was a determination by all the parties in the Talks to move forward but we cannot have the integrity of the process violated, but let me stress again this approach could certainly not be maintained in the event of further violence by the organisations which are linked to the parties in the Talks.

MEDIA

Secretary of State, what do you say to the Republican charge against you that ???????indictment in the first place that you were prosecution unfair do you think?

SECRETARY OF STATE

No, what I would say back, is that we have walls of procedure put in place. I got a full briefing from the Chief Constable, I accepted his word but not only that, then the Prime Minister and I examined the information, looked at it, questioned it, fully examined and made an assessment. Its in that context that we took a pace

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to, as the Alliance did to the Talks process, procedure that's been followed three or four times in the past. I have then sat, and you will give grave notice that even though I had that information. It is not solely on that, that I reached the decision. I reached it jointly with the Irish Government and I reach it after listening to Sinn Fein and to all the parties. We have not taken lightly any of that information, as David has said we spent nearly two and a half days looking at it, discussing, debating, so it is a difficulty in the Talks but it had worked before, nobody questioned it then and it is a political process, its about confidence, its about trust and that is part of what's its been about.

DAVID ANDREWS

Secretary of State, if I may just add during the course of the handing over of the determination. Mr Adam's and his colleagues asked for a meeting with the Taoiseach and with Mr Blair and I would like

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to say that I subsequently been in touch with the Taoiseach who has agreed to meet with them over the next number of days. I am certain that my colleague Mo Mowlam will be in touch with Mr Blair and he will give it his decision in that regard also. Just to let you know that the Toiseach as I say is willing to meet with Mr Adams.

MEDIA

What do you say to the critics of the process now, Secretary of State, who argued that the three crucial days set aside for negotiations were wasted in Dublin. And that the lesson now is that events outside the process, ??????? between now and May ??????? after subsequent acts of violence?

SECRETARY OF STATE

The process has always had the difficulty of being faced by many outside the process, INLA, the IRA, LVF who not only don't support it but actively want to destroy it. There has been no doubt about that. What we have to do in terms of the Talks process, that's why this

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decision was difficult but important, is to protect the integrity of that process. This we have done, alongside that what we have to be very clear about, is that we have six weeks and we have to, together in the Talks process show a determination in a focus which I believe is there by the leaders of the parties round that table. To in the next six weeks get to a position by 1 May so that we can have the accommodation that can be put to people in a referendum north/south. That is the only way to deal with the outside forces.

MEDIA

Secretary of State, UDP has been out of the Talks for twenty five days already by my reckoning after the UDA admitted to have carried out killings. The IRA hasn't admitted to carrying out any killings, Sinn Fein has disbowled any links between it and the IRA, yet Sinn Fein are going to be allowed back into these Talks in seventeen days time. Why the difference?

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SECRETARY OF STATE

Well, I have made it clear that I don't believe there isn't a link between Sinn Fein and the IRA, I have always argued that they have been inextricably linked. And on the basis on the information we had and do bear in mind, that on the Market Hill bomb which was disowned previously. No disowning was had in this event. So I think we have a case that is substantiated. What I said earlier, its the generation to both the UDP and in relation to Sinn Fein that they have been doubted in the process alongside the Mitchell Principles. But what counts now is that judgement that we've made is two Governments who have listened to the parties is that six weeks left, the end game is close. And that is why we have reached the decisions on the timings that we have. But with the footnote that we have to take into account that any further actions, the further violence by the organisations linked to the parties do not make it a possibility.

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DAVID ANDREWS

Just to add to what the Secretary of State has said, we point out the determination that the Talks should conclude within six weeks and you say the end game is close. And on those circumstances I think it is reasonable to accept that we should have all parties aboard the Talks to that conclusion.

MEDIA

Secretary of State, for some nationalists because the matter is not whether give ???/cease-fire and whether Sinn Fein should be expelled, its the fact that the two Governments in light of the Chief Constable's comments last May did not take any action months ago to indict loyalists, so can I ask you why that didn't happen?

SECRETARY OF STATE

I think one has to bear in mind, that is as I have said there is sufficient evidence to my view and the Prime Minister's in the evidence in that the Chief Constable which I accept in good faith has been given to us. And I believe that evidence to be

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very strong. And one has to accept whatever, whether you agree with my interpretation or not, we have two dead bodies and two grieving families, to deal with. In terms of your comparison between the two, when we have been presented with information in the process of one of the parties being linked to ?????? that they are linked to, has been put before us, we have acted. We have not had that kind of information previously and when we do we have acted.

MEDIA

?????? all elements of ??????
John's widow will say there is a body, her dead husband, that should have been sufficient for you to act in those circumstances?

SECRETARY OF STATE

No the difficulty, and I don't want to get into individual cases, cos I don't think that's helpful here. But let me just reassure you, and my heart goes out to John ?????? wife, but let me say that where we have evidence, we have acted. We

NA/Doorstep

have not taken this, I can assure you that fairness and equality if you ask across the parties. That has been our bottom line. And that is how we will act.

MEDIA

First question... Do you believe at this moment in time that the IRA cease-fire is in tact? Secondly.....Did the Chief Constable tell you in his assessment that killings of any nature were carried out, would be direction or the instructions otherwise of the leadership of the IRA.....

SECRETARY OF STATE

I am not answering, cos I have an indictment up against me in the Dublin Court and I have a case of contempt of Court and a ????????? case of three people that have been charged in the north. That to me is a strong enough reason. My concern in admitting Sinn Fein to the Talks in the beginning was the quality of the IRA cease-fire. And the confidence and the quality of that cease-fire, I believe has been seriously undermined by the

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two murders, I believe by the IRA. The only people who can begin to restore that confidence are Sinn Fein and the IRA.

MEDIA

Have you asked the Chief Constable for a report into the killing of ????????

SECRETARY OF STATE

Yes I have, I asked the minute I was told as I usually am informed when there has been a killing and I have asked for information in that. All I have been told verbally and I do not have a written response yet, do I? I haven't seen one, I have been very busy today. I don't have a written response, all I do know is that their judgement is they don't think. They think it was more criminal than sectarian, but that is not one hundred percent, and that is all I have been told, David.

NA/Doorstep

**SECRETARY OF STATE INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN GRIMASON - 20
FEBRUARY 1998**

Media Secretary of State, Sinn Fein are out of these Talks for six days. There will be those who will say that's not an awful lot given the fact that two people are dead.

SofS Two people are dead and one's thoughts are with their families inevitably. Sinn Fein, in our view and the view of the Irish Government, demonstrably dishonoured the Mitchell Principles. They have therefore been excluded from the Talks. The timescale we looked at for both them and the UDP in the context of the six weeks we have left to find some accommodation between the parties. We want that process to be as inclusive as possible so they have been asked to leave the process on the wishes of both Governments and after listening to the parties. But we want to get an agreement in six weeks and that has been taken into account in the decision that we have just reached.

Media In the terms of the UDP, there they were, they were honest, the UFF admitted the murders they were involved in and they were rejected for four weeks. Here we now have Sinn Fein saying the IRA have got nothing to do with us and they only got half that amount of time out.

SofS I think its three weeks to March 10 if my sums are right

Media Two weeks of Talks

SofS They have been thrown out three weeks. The UDP were out for four and as I have just explained the criteria that we looked at was a balance between the breaking of the Mitchell Principles which they have done and we want to be clear that that has to have an effect, and we have done that

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but we have to make a judgement against the future of the Talks which the process is there to take forward. That's the judgement we have made.

Media

This expulsion is based on two murders. What happens if any of the groups now, there is UDP and Sinn Fein or a group connected to them is involved in a further murder, have we had a final warnings to parties, are they out for good next time?

SofS

We made it clear in the press conference this afternoon that any further acts of violence by any of the groups that are related to those represented in the Talks will be the final time. They will then be out for good.

Media

You said that you felt the Conway murder in Lurgan was more criminal than sectarian, does that mean you are now eliminating the IRA from that particular investigation?

SofS

No, I was asked a specific question about what information I had, I was told as I always am when there has been a killing. I then ask for further information. I have received yet nothing in writing, but I have been told that initial investigations suggest more criminal than sectarian. That's all I am able to say at this point.

Media

Sinn Fein say the determination that they are out of the Talks is a disgrace because its full of double standards and they make the point that by the Chief Constable's comment about every element of this CLMC, when that existed having reached a cease-fire, and yet no one was expelled at that point. Is there not a suggestion of double standards here?

SofS

No there's not, and we have been very clear that we treat everybody fairly and equally the same. Previous killings that

NA/Doortop

we have suffered in the last month when they have been identified with a specific group that is represented in the Talks, we have acted. That information has not been available, even despite the breakdown of the CLMC connected to particular murders. When I have information, I act.

Media

After the last week of Talks in Dublin, where there were no Talks, it was a process of expulsion for three days. People are going to want to know just where is this process?

SofS

I can understand the frustration that people will feel. I have to say many in the Talks process, not only did we have days lost to actual negotiations at Lancaster House in London, but Dublin, three days gone at Dublin Castle. All I can say to people is that we had to make a judgement on the integrity of the process and when people dishonour the Mitchell Principles. I think it is important that we act. But what is also clear after Dublin is a determination by the party leaders to move it forward and by the both Governments and a realisation that we now have a window of opportunity to do that. We have six weeks and I can assure people listening that we are going to do everything within our power. As I am sure those in the parties will, to make sure that we continue to make progress. And let's not forget, yes, we have had a terrible week but my goodness we made progress before that and I believe we will continue to do so.

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