

Executive Information Service

Department of Education

10 January 2002

MARTIN McGUINNESS STATEMENT - OUR LADY OF MERCY ATTACK

Following today's attack on Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School, Ballysillan, Education Minister, Martin McGuinness said: "I am extremely disturbed at the attack this morning on our Lady of Mercy Secondary School which was extremely frightening for pupils, their parents and the staff of the school and also resulted in extensive damage to teachers' cars.

"This comes after the events of yesterday when the pupils of Holy Cross had to be evacuated from the school for their own safety and the neighbouring Wheatfield primary school was forced to close early. We all saw the extensive rioting that ensued in the area last night.

"Nothing can justify attacks on school children or on schools. I would appeal to everyone to draw back and think about the damage these disturbances are doing to both communities and in particular to our children. This violence is traumatising our children and sowing the seeds of sectarian hatred and division in future generations.

"The only way to resolve differences is through dialogue and I call on community representatives and local politicians to show leadership by calming their communities and getting together to find a way through these problems. These attacks on children and schools must stop."

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