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Priest says latest violence is morally and tactically wrong

DISSIDENT ARRESTS

BY Valerie Robinson Southern Correspondent

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A priest has said the 72-year armed campaign waged by the IRA had “some moral justification” but that violence by dissident republicans is wrong.

Cork-based Fr Tomas Walsh said the peace process now meant that the sense of grievance once felt by disenfranchised nationalists was no longer an aspect of Irish life.

“The denial of human and civil rights, the hurt resulting from exclusion of nationalists from participation in governance and the failed efforts to find solutions via the paths of non-violence created an environment between the years 1922 and 1994 where war could be waged with some moral justification and with a good deal of support from the nationalist community,” he said.

“The glaring fact now is that, resulting from the Good Friday Agreement – with its end of one-party unionist rule, its enshrined parity of esteem of both nationalist and unionist traditions and the involvement of republican, nationalist and unionist in government – there is no longer any pervading sense of grievance among the nationalist community.”

Fr Walsh, pictured, a development officer with the Society of African Missions (SMA) who spent 26 years in Nigeria until returning home two years ago, said the renewed campaign by dissident republicans was both “morally and tactically wrong”.

He described as “lunacy” any effort by the Real and Continuity IRA to resume violence in an atmosphere where they did not have the support of the community and where they were publicly perceived as drugs gangs.

“Also, the post-Omagh and the post-9/11 world, with slaughter witnessed on a sickening scale, offers no toleration for armed struggle, however just the cause.

“Taking everything into consideration any renewed/ intensified armed campaign at the present time is doomed to failure,” he said.


He urged dissident leaders to abandon armed resistance and to engage in political activity aimed at “undermining British rule in Ireland through legitimate means”.

“They owe it to their own volunteers, especially those in gaol, and the people of Ireland to call off their campaigns and enter negotiations with both the Irish and British governments,” he said.

“They should do it now.”

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