



English/Gaeilge



Adams holds British Secretary of State responsible for Sunday March controversy

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Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams MP MLA has expressed "serious concern at the failure of British Secretary of State Shaun Woodward to recognise the provocation offered by the British Army military parade in Belfast City centre".

Mr. Adams called for "a calm and dignified protest."

He acknowledged that "others will have a different view of Sunday's events" but appealed to them to "understand that the history of the British Army in Ireland was one of great cruelty and hurt. Victims of collusion and British state violence are particularly offended and aggrieved by Sunday's march pass."

Mr. Adams said:

"I hold the British Secretary of State responsible for the controversy that has arisen around the British Army's military parade in Belfast on Sunday.

While the British Ministry of Defence may be oblivious to the sensitivities involved surely Shaun Woodward should have realised that Sunday's event is ill-advised.

A civic reception and a religious service would have provided families and supporters of the British Army with the opportunity to welcome back their loved ones. And while many Belfast citizens may not support such events there would have been little protestation, particularly by those who understand that the feelings in particular of families and friends of serving British soldiers.

I very publicly want to acknowledge that the families of the soldiers involved are pleased to see their loved ones return from a dangerous situation.

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This is very understandable and acceptable.

But the decision by the British Ministry of Defence to organise a military parade through Belfast City centre is totally unacceptable, not least because of the role of British forces in Ireland and in the city of Belfast. Republican and nationalist Belfast has suffered dreadfully under British military rule in the recent conflict. At times working class unionists and loyalists have also felt the brunt of British military actions. Indeed at times the British Army has come under fire from loyalist gunmen. So there are lots of contradictions in the unionist and loyalist position.

There are also people, including many who are not Sinn Féin supporters, who feel that a march to celebrate the actions of the British Army and the British government in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is wrong.

In Belfast Sinn Féin has been attempting to create the sense of a shared city where citizens can agree to disagree on some issues, but unite in the common good on other issues. That means creating space, not least on a contentious issue like Sunday's event for peaceful expression of differences of opinion.

I believe that it is possible for both opinions to be given expression on Sunday if everyone participating does so calmly and with dignity and restraint.

Sinn Féin has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that the march and rally will be well-marshalled and managed, as well as peaceful and dignified.

The remarks by some unionist representatives have been over the top. They too have a responsibility to use their best influence to ensure that Sunday's events pass peacefully."
ENDS

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