



Building an Ireland of Equals

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Caitríona
Ruane

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Sinn Féin has always been foursquare behind families in their quest for truth, closure, justice and an end to the hierarchy of victims.

I would like to applaud families throughout this island who with dignity, courage and determination took on the might of the British state forces against all the odds. 34 years ago we had Bloody Sunday in Derry, and 34 years later they are still campaigning for truth, The Caraher Family in South Armagh, Patrick Shanaghan's family in Aghyaran in Tyrone, Loughinisland Families in Down, Raymond McCord, the Dublin Monaghan bombings and many many more. And our thoughts are with brave defence solicitors, people like Rosemary Nelson and Pat Finucane and PJ McGrory. Campaigners against plastic bullets, Relatives for Justice, Pat Finucane Centre.

I would ask you to put your hands together for the families, the solicitors and the campaigners who refused to lie down and who fearlessly took on the British State no matter what the consequences.

I was privileged to travel to Strasbourg with families who were taking on the British Government in the European Court on Shoot to Kill and Collusion. I was so proud of all those families and their legal team. I watched as the British Government with all their fancy lawyers and all their resources were ruled against in that court and the world saw their dirty war laid bare. For a number of years now Sinn Féin has been involved in protracted negotiations and has placed policing at the very heart of them.

The reason why policing is such a challenging issue, the reason why we have been fighting tooth and nail to get it right is because we don't want anyone, ever again to experience the type of political policing we have had. Our community deserves proper policing and we are determined to get it. There is no place for human rights abusers in civic policing.

Can we afford to leave policing or indeed any institution to unionism? Would we hand over total control over health, or education or our children to unionism? Of course we wouldn't. With negotiations on transfer of powers and accountability mechanisms now is the time for us to get in there, hold the PSNI to

account and fight tooth and nail for a police service that is representative, and accountable. Republicans have to ensure that we never allow what happened in the past to happen again to anyone.

We know what our strategic objective is, we know what we are working towards: a United Ireland, rooted in equality. We have to ask ourselves what is the most effective way of moving forward. We can bring about change. We can create a new beginning to policing. We can create an unstoppable momentum for a United Ireland. It will not be easy, it will be an enormous challenge but nothing we have done has ever been easy.

The Nationalist / Republican community in the North of Ireland is on the move, it is confident and strong, it is proud and forward looking. It is looking to us for leadership. I believe that by giving a resounding yes to this motion and by moving forward together united and strong we can make history and meet every challenge head on. Ní neart go cur le chéile.

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