

ECHR - MAZE PROTEST - HMG POSITION PAPER

Principles

HMG has consistently asserted certain principles in respect of prison administration on which it would not be prepared to compromise. These principles are:-

- (1) no political or special category status for any prisoners. Any differentiation of treatment of a certain group or class of prisoners in Northern Ireland is objectionable under this principle.
- (2) The prison authorities must remain fully in control of the prison administration and of the major elements of day-to-day life in the prisons.

Subject however to those principles, HMG has shown itself to be flexible and willing to introduce changes in the prison regime for both conforming and protesting prisoners. The following changes have been introduced since the ECHR made its last investigation into the Maze and action by HMG to improve the conditions in which the protesting prisoners presently live continues.

Additional privileges made available to protesting prisoners

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|---|-------------------------|
| (1) Provision of plimsolls, vests and shorts for exercise)  | } 26.3.80               |
| (2) Weekly letter in and out instead of monthly.  |                         |
| (3) Two visits per month instead of one.  |                         |
| (4) One extra hour's physical recreation each week in the gymnasium.  | } August/September 1980 |
| (5) One evening's association per week.   |                         |
| (6) Availability of "closed" visits to prisoners who refuse to be searched.   |                         |
| (7) Books and newspapers made available in each Wing.   |                         |
| (8) Compassionate home leave on death of a near relative made available on the same basis as for conforming prisoners.                              |                         |
| (9) For those prisoners on a "clean" protest the rate of loss of remission was halved as compared with those on the "dirty" protest. (January 1981) |                         |
| (10) Special monthly parcel for protesters to contain up to 4 lbs of fruit and toilet articles. (January 1981)                                      |                         |
| (11) One hour extra exercise each day. (January)  |                         |

Ex-protesting prisoners

12. Following a review a partial restoration of lost remission is now being given to those who have discontinued their protest and are now fully conforming.

All prisoners

- 13 All prisoners now benefit from the Government's decision to abolish prison uniform as such and to substitute prison-issue

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civilian-style clothing which is available as a personal issue to each prisoner.

Despite the action in January last of a number of protesting prisoners involving the destruction of cell furniture and damage to cells, all protesting prisoners have now been issued with beds and bedding, tables and chairs and the issue of other cell furniture continues. At the request of protesting prisoners, writing material and pens were provided as were additional books and newspapers.