



# Sinn Féin committed to re-establishing institutions for all

ANALYSIS OF CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION BY MICHELLE O'NEILL

I LAID out the Sinn Féin position last week while addressing our All-Ireland parliamentary teams in North county Dublin.

I said that the route-map to an agreement in the Stormont talks is clear.

That is still the case.

And the destination at the end of that route-map is equally clear.

It is a society where all citizens are treated with equality and respect by the Executive whom they democratically elect to serve the people.

Where no one faces discrimination because of the language they speak, where they come from or who they love.

Where families who have lost loved ones during the conflict are afforded compassion and their right to due process through the courts.

Can anyone logically explain why a loving couple cannot marry in the North, but can do so across the rest of these islands?

Why children being educated through the medium of Irish are being denied the same language rights as enjoyed by their peers in other parts of these islands?

Or why some bereaved families have now been waiting over 40 years for inquests to be held?

That wouldn't be tolerated anywhere else and it will not be tolerated here.

So our destination is a society that puts an end to the denial of rights.

A society governed by political institutions on the basis of integrity, mutual respect and equal partnership government. A government where commitments given and agreements made are honoured and implemented to the benefit of all of society.

No one who is genuinely committed to the well-being of citizens, to good governance and the delivery of the very best public services has anything to fear from that.

It is not a republican agenda; it is a progressive agenda. A people-first agenda.

That is what Sinn Féin spent ten years in the Executive trying to build under the leadership of Martin McGuinness.

As a member of the Executive I witnessed how he worked with successive DUP leaders, to con-



tinually reach out to unionists on the basis of equality, respect and reconciliation.

It pained him greatly that his leadership wasn't reciprocated.

There is a mutual obligation on the First and deputy First Ministers to represent their respective communities, who have distinct identities. There is also a special responsibility on the joint office to bridge the divide between those communities by representing everyone together.

Martin persevered because it was the right thing to do and no one can question Sinn Féin's track record in the Executive. We not only worked the institutions, but heavily invested in them up until the point of collapse.

They are an integral part of our strategy, pivotal to our plans to transform society for the better on this island.

Sinn Féin wants to bring about fundamental societal change North and South. This therefore requires us to be in government in both Dublin and Belfast.

So we are absolutely committed to seeing the political institutions re-established. We are determined to build on Martin's legacy, but not at any cost.

That is what success in the talks looks like - new institutions founded on their original guiding principles of equality and mutual respect.

This would be an important advance for citizens who want the parties to turn a corner and who want to see a significant step change. A new political era which looks to the future, rather

than the past.

To date, there have been three phases of talks, which have not yet produced the right basis to form a sustainable executive.

However, I remain convinced that we can find a resolution and I welcome the recent intensification of talks with the DUP and Arlene Foster's acknowledgment that legislative protections should be afforded to Irish speakers.

That is common ground, a good starting point. However nobody can be in any doubt that we still have a mountain to climb.

We need to build on that in the days ahead. To broaden the common ground further.

To re-establish the institutions on the basis they were originally designed and endorsed by the people of Ireland in the Good Friday Agreement.

It is doable, it is achievable. It doesn't require anyone to compromise their principles or lose face. I have said time and again, I do not want to see majorities or minorities - only equality and respect.

Citizens rights need to be underpinned in law. Citizens must have the means to legally challenge any denial of their rights.

This means all citizens regardless of political allegiance.

And it's the key to unlocking the current impasse and the restoration of institutions that can deliver for all of our people.

## SINN FÉIN AWAY DAY CONFERENCE

Tuesday, September 5, 2017 • Gerry Adams speech

# Time for Change

A Chairde,

LET'S talk about the journey and challenges ahead of us.

In this state the Fine-Gael minority government, propped up by their friends in Fianna Fáil, has carried on where the last government left off – creating crises in our public services and failing ordinary people.

This is the most dysfunctional government since partition.

In the North, both the DUP and the British government continue to refuse to agree that the Executive and the Assembly be restored on the basis of equality, respect and integrity for all.

They also disrespect and ignore the vote of people in the North in the Brexit referendum and are insisting on dragging the North out of the EU against the wishes of the electorate.

In fact, the DUP have torn up propositions being developed with Sinn Féin and others on Brexit in favour of the Tory government's little Englander approach.

At the same time politics are in flux and in transition.

Just as unionism now has less than 50% electoral support in the north and the notion of a perpetual majority is gone, the same is increasingly true of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

More and more people are standing up for their rights and for equality.

People are demanding change.

### SINN FÉIN WANTS TO BE IN GOVERNMENT

What is needed now is a government for citizens.

Such a government would invest in world-class public services and develop a vibrant, sustainable economy that works for people instead of against them.

It would also be an accountable government.

A government grounded in basic, common decency which acts:

If somebody is in trouble, to help them.

If somebody has fallen, to pick them up.

If somebody is danger, to protect them.

That's the sort of government that is



needed.

A government for equality.

And, make no mistake; Sinn Féin wants to be in that government.

We want to transform politics on this island.

We have no ambition to be part of the system.

Our ambition is to change it.

That means we must be in government – North and South.

### THE CRISIS IN HOUSING

There are over ninety thousand households on local authority waiting lists.

And almost eight thousand people are living in emergency accommodation, including almost three thousand children!

One in three people experiencing homelessness in this state is a child!

How can this crisis be ended?

The answer is obvious.

The state needs to build homes for its citizens.

That's what Sinn Féin will do in government.

That means turning away from the mé

féin – Galway Tent – politics that created the crisis in the first place and then made it worse.

Sinn Féin will not manage the housing crisis. We will end it.

Not on terms set by the market, or through tax cuts for developers as proposed by Fianna Fáil, or on terms set by those holding on to land banks.

Sinn Féin will build houses.

We will deliver a social and affordable housing programme.

We will implement a plan to get the thousands of vacant properties back into use.

And Sinn Féin will introduce rent certainty and security of tenure by linking any increases to an index such as the consumer price index.

We will do this because we believe everyone has the right to a home.

### THE CRISIS IN HEALTH

Sinn Féin has the vision, the policies, and the political will to end the crisis in our hospitals and build the health service that people need and deserve.

This means ending the trolley crisis in

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our emergency departments through proper investment and resourcing of community care.

Sinn Féin is absolutely committed to creating a public health care system based on need and funded by progressive taxation.

Healthcare, like housing, should be a right for all citizens and not a privilege for the well-off.

That should be the starting point. The principle. The objective.

It's all about equality.

About the rights of citizens.

About a rights based society.

And the right to a home and to health care is a fundamental part of this.

So too there must be protection and support for families, farmers and businesses that are the victim of environmental disasters.

### BREXIT

Brexit is most serious social, economic and political threat to the island of Ireland for a generation.

The people of the North voted against Brexit.

The Irish government has a responsibility to defend that vote and to act in the best interests of all the people of this island.

The Taoiseach also has a responsibility to defend the Good Friday Agreement which Brexit threatens and to ensure that EU citizens living in the North continue to have their EU rights protected after Brexit.

The Irish government should insist, and the Taoiseach must make it clear at the EU summit planned for October, that failure by the British to make progress must mean that the Brexit negotiations are not ready to move to the next stage of discussions.

It is also time for the Irish government to accept that the best protection for the island of Ireland in any post Brexit arrangement is for the North to be designated Special Status within the EU.

Brexit has also reenergised and reshaped the debate about a united Ireland.

That demands a new approach aimed at unlocking unionist opposition to a new future by reminding them of the positive contribution they have made to society on this island.

Instead of concentrating on the negative aspects of our four centuries of shared history I suggest that we embrace the areas of agreement and of co-operation; of good neighbourliness and the common good.



I encourage everybody to join this public discussion and debate.

Sinn Féin is seeking the support of all parties in the Oireachtas for a committee on Irish Unity.

We will also be bringing forward a White Paper on Irish Unity.

And we want to see a referendum on unity in the next five years.

We believe that this is achievable and winnable.

We also believe that this should be government policy.

### THE CRISIS IN THE NORTH

Contrary to the bogus argument being put by some it is self-evident that Sinn Féin is fully committed to the power sharing institutions agreed in the Good Friday Agreement.

In the face of disrespect and inequality and an absence of integrity by some; the failure to implement previous agreements, and the Renewable Heat Incentive scandal, Martin took the right decision and resigned.

His stand was vindicated in the Assembly and Westminster elections.

The political institutions can only work if they are based on equality, respect and integrity.

Last week's proposal by the DUP Leader Arlene Foster for a parallel process is a non-runner, and she knew this.

But it did contain a welcome acknowledgement that the Irish language threatens no one.

I'm sure the crocodiles are delighted to hear that.

And it did include a promise of legisla-

tion.

Cuirim fáilte roimh an athrú sin.

This is welcome also.

But more than soft words are required.

Michelle O'Neill has called for a short time-framed period of exploratory talks to determine whether progress is possible or not.

If the DUP is serious let them engage in that process.

### CONCLUSION – CALL TO ACT

Finally, let me remind all of you that Sinn Féin is at our strongest electorally since the 1918 election.

Over half a million citizens have voted Sinn Féin in recent elections.

We had two outstanding elections this year in the North.

We must continue working hard in our communities and in all of the political institutions.

We must convince more people that change is possible.

I also expect the referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment will be held soon and Sinn Féin will campaign strongly for a YES vote.

It's about putting women first.

The Eighth Amendment is a relic of the past.

It has to go. It must be replaced with compassion.

Sinn Féin will campaign enthusiastically and energetically for the eighth amendment to be repealed.

We will urge all of those who oppose inequality and discrimination to join us in this.



# No Irish Language Act – No Assembly – Adams

SINN Féin President Gerry Adams TD, speaking this morning about efforts to re-establish the political institutions in the North said:

“The issue of citizens’ rights is at the core of the current political crisis in the North. Let me be very clear there will be no Assembly and no Executive, without a stand-alone Irish Language Act.

“Irish language speakers in the North must have the same legislative protections that are available everywhere else on these islands.

“The North is changing. It must be a place, which embraces all of its citizens, and respects all on the basis of equality. This does not threaten anyone. On the contrary it is a reflection of the changed political conditions in that part of the island and the need for all citizens there to have their rights respected.

“It is also imperative that the issue of rights is set in the wider context of Brexit. The current negotiations between the EU and Britain will conclude today with little sign of progress. In addition, the British remain committed to scrapping the role of the European Court of Justice and eroding the protections afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights. Under the Good Friday Agreement every citizen in the North has the right to EU citizenship. That



right must be protected in the current negotiations.”

Dismissing criticism from some unionist leaders about Sinn Féin’s commitment to the political institutions Gerry Adams said:

“Under Martin McGuinness’s leadership, through the work of other Sinn Féin ministers and MLAs, republicans have repeatedly demonstrated our commitment to the political institutions. Sinn Féin’s entire political strategy is vested in workable Good Friday Agreement institutions that are delivering for citizens.

“The Assembly election mandated Sinn Féin to go back into the Executive and As-

sembly but clearly and only on the basis of equality and the implementation of outstanding issues. Sinn Féin is committed to fulfilling that mandate.”

The Sinn Féin leader urged the Irish government “to stand firm against any suggestion by unionists or the British of a return to Direct Rule. The Irish government has a responsibility under the St Andrew’s Agreement to ensure that direct rule doesn’t re-occur. If for any reason that can’t happen then we have to have a new configuration involving both governments in the absence of a willingness from unionism to embrace the type of dispensation which is required.”

## EU and Irish Government ‘must put British Brexit rhetoric to the test’ – Cullinane

SPEAKING as talks between the EU and British governments on Brexit reconvened, Sinn Féin Brexit spokesperson David Cullinane said:

“Over the past two weeks, we have seen a series of contradictory positions papers on Brexit released by the British government. These claim to want to retain the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts and maintain free trade and movement of people between Ireland and Britain. At the same time, they are pulling out of the single market, customs



**David Cullinane TD**

union, and European Court of Justice.

“The British government have failed to give a long term commit-

ment to the European Convention on Human Rights, access to the EU Court of Human rights or how North South co-operation would work in their vision of Brexit. All of these are central to the Good Friday Agreement and, our economies and jobs, North and South.

“Recognition of these inconsistencies is reflected in the changing position of the British Labour party. This is to be welcomed and my colleague Chris Hazzard MP will be meeting with the Labour party shortly.

“The EU and the Irish Govern-

ment must now put the British Government rhetoric to the test. If the British government are serious about safeguarding the Good Friday Agreement and maintain progress, they must make clear how this will be achieved and clarify their future membership of the customs union.

“It is acknowledged that Brexit is without precedent and there is agreement that the Good Friday Agreement must be protected. The solution must be to provide for the north to have special status within the EU.”

## INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

**Basque Country:** Martina Anderson 17 June. EH Bildu conference.

Sinn Féin MEP, Martina Anderson, addressed the first EH Bildu conference in Bilbao on 17 June stressing the importance of building a broad-based party with strong links to local communities.

Speaking after she addressed the conference Martina Anderson said: 'I was honoured to address the First EH Bildu conference alongside International representatives from Colombia, Kurdistan, Catalonia, Aragón and the Canaries. It is great to see a stronger, more united, vibrant left force in the Basque Country. It is a positive step forward in the fight against the neoliberal austerity agenda and for a left, democratic and in-

dependent alternative. Building a strong party, based in the community, the people and social movements, is an important step towards fighting for freedom and justice. This is even more important in places like the Basque Country and Ireland, where we are both still struggling for national liberation as well as social justice. I told the delegates that they can always rely on Sinn Féin to be a constant ally and friend to the Basque struggle and the Basque people. I hope that in the time ahead EH Bildu can seize the opportunity to represent and unite all the Basque people in a peaceful struggle for liberation, independence and social justice'.



**Arnaldo Otegi and Martina Anderson MEP at the EH Bildu conference in Bilbao.**

## INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

**Venezuela:** Mickey Brady 27 – 31 July. CNE International observer



**Mickey Brady MP, along with Venezuela's Foreign Minister, Samuel Moncada (middle in suit) and Adrian Kane, Siptu representative, whilst in Caracas, Venezuela.**

SINN Féin MP, Mickey Brady, travelled to Venezuela at the request of CNE as an international observer to the 30 July Constitutional Assembly elections.

Speaking in advance of his departure Brady stressed the importance of this election and the role of international observers, in the current Venezuelan political climate.

He said 'Acting in my capacity as an international observer I am eager to ensure there remains international confidence in what is a crucial election for the Venezuelan people. The electorate has an opportunity to decide who sits in their Constitutional Assembly in a free and fair election.

"As observers our role is to ensure that only the people of Venezuela determine the future direction of their country."

## INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

**Barcelona:** Conor Murphy 20 May. Candidatura d'Unitat popular (CUP)

SINN Féin MLA for Newry and Armagh, Conor Murphy, travelled to Barcelona, on 20 May, to speak at an international congress on 'Sovereignty and self-determination'.

Conor was invited by the pro-Catalan independence political organisation, Candidatura d'Unitat popular (CUP). Other international guests in attendance were representatives from Germany, Kurdistan, Morocco, Poland and Scotland. In his address to the international congress Conor shared the experience of the Irish peace process, provided an update on the current situation in Ireland and expressed continued Sinn Féin solidarity and support for the Catalan people in their right to determine their own future and demand that the Spanish Government accepts their rights to a binding referendum.





## INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

**Budapest: Pádraig MacLochlainn 19 – 21 July. European Left**

SINN Féin Senator, Pádraig MacLochlainn, travelled to Budapest at the request of the 'European Left' to attend and speak at a plenary session on 'Different roads for the Left in Europe' at their Summer University event on 20 July.

Also speaking at this session was Eftychia Achtsioglou, Minister for Labour, Social Se-

curity and Social Solidarity in Greece; Marga Ferré, Europe of Citizens Foundation, Transform, Spain; and a representative from Bloco de Esquerda, Portugal.

Pádraig provided an update on the Brexit issue, an analysis of the recent Assembly and Westminster elections, and the on-going Uniting Ireland campaign.



## INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

**Brittany: Raymond McCartney 19 – 21 May. French Communist Party**

SINN Féin MLA for Foyle, Raymond McCartney, travelled to Brittany, France, 19 – 21 May, at the request of the French Communist Party (PCF). Raymond was invited to France to provide an update on the current situation in Ireland.

In Raymond's address to the French audience he said 'Brexit has once more brought into sharp focus the contradiction of partition at the heart of Irish politics.

This directly challenges democracy and Irish national interests. However, it has also created an equally unprecedented political and civic discussion in Ireland about the future. We believe that these new challenges need to be converted into a positive, national conversation about how the constitutional, political and economic future of



the island can be reimagined and redesigned.

The Irish Government should urgently act to secure the north of Ireland's place in the EU. A new phase of political change has arrived and the significant strategic political influence of the international community should now assist with planning for the transition towards a new agreed, united Ireland.

It is time to end the division of Ireland and prepare the transition to Irish unity. A positive, international axis to encourage, persuade for, and support that aim is now required.'

**Raymond McCartney MLA**

## INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

**Copenhagen: Jim McVeigh 12 – 14 May. Red-Green Alliance event**

SINN Féin councillor, Jim McVeigh, travelled to Copenhagen to attend the Red-Green Alliance annual conference 12 – 14 May.

The conference was also attended by representatives from the Basque Country, France, Portugal, Germany, Spain, Galicia, Sweden, Colombia and the Western Sahara.

Jim said his attendance at the conference provided Sinn Féin with the opportunity to listen to other international delegates on issues affecting their countries and how we can collectively work together to build a more democratic and just Europe. Jim was also able to provide an analysis of the current sit-

uation in Ireland discussing the effects of Brexit, the on-going negotiations in the North and the Uniting Ireland Campaign.

Jim said 'Our attendance at the Red-Green Alliance conference was a further example of our commitment to building a more equal Ireland in a more equal Europe'.



**Cllr. Jim McVeigh**



## Pat Sheehan MLA meets Omar Barghouti

Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, was in Ireland on 4 July where he met with Sinn Féin's Middle East Desk Head, MLA, Pat Sheehan and Sinn Féin's International Department manager, Tom Holland. A positive and constructive engagement was held discussing the development of a closer working relationship on matters of mutual concern. Pat Sheehan reaffirmed Sinn Féin's commitment to the BDS campaign and wider struggle of the Palestinian people to their rights of Statehood. Omar Barghouti welcomed Sinn Féin's historic support and looked forward to greater solidarity cooperation.

## Colombian Trades unionist briefs Belfast Sinn Féin activists

SINCE the beginning of 2016 alarming statistics on feminicides have been reported in Colombia. There have been multiple killings of women throughout the country; in the department of Valle del Cauca in south-west Colombia there were 14 feminicides in only 28 days. The majority of victims are killed by their own partners or former partners, many of whom had already been reported to authorities for domestic abuse.

The National Institute for Forensic Science has stated that from 2014 to mid-2015 there were 1,351 feminicidios in Colombia. Although in July 2015 the Colombian government signed the "Rosa Elvira Cely" Law against feminicides, feminist and women's activists have criticized the government for failing to safeguard women's rights. There have been reports of police brutality against sex workers and in Bogotá a woman who died in the street was left there for seven hours. The riot police were sent when the local community called for a response. Information courtesy of JFC. Senior Colombian Trades Unionist and recently released political prisoner Huber Ballesteros during a meeting with a delegation of Sinn Féin activists in Belfast on 5 July outlined his frustration over the delays by the Colombian government in implementing elements of the peace accords they signed with the FARC leadership to end the decades long insurrection in the South American country.

Ballesteros travelled to Ireland as an international guest at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) biannual conference to not only brief people on the current situation in his country but to highlight the continued threats against Colombian activists like himself and make people aware of the continued need "for international support to ensure the full implementation of the Colombian peace agreement".

He also thanked Sinn Féin for the party's solidarity with the people of Colombia and its support for Justice for Colombia (JFC) who organised his trip.

JFC is a British NGO that campaigns for human rights, workers' rights and the search for peace with social justice in Colombia. "It is essential that Justice for Colombia continues its vital work for peace and social justice in Colombia" he stated.

Among the Sinn Féin delegation were a number of senior party figures who had travelled to Cuba where they met with representatives of all sides to the talks process, these included former Ministers in the Executive Megan Fearon, Conor Murphy and Jennifer McCann.

Also present was Paul Maskey MP who travelled to Colombia on a number of occasions as



**Huber Ballesteros standing with Sinn Féin activists, a human rights lawyer and members of 'Justice For Colombia'.**

a member of international delegations. MLAs Fra McCann and Pat Sheehan attended as did members of the Mairead Farrell Republican Youth Committee (MFRYC).

Councillor Séanna Walsh and Michael Culbert representing Coiste na nIarchimí who travelled to Cuba during the talks to brief the FARC representatives on developments around the political prisoner issue also attended the briefing.

Ballesteros raised the concerns of Colombian civil society and the Patriotic March organisation, of which he is National Organiser, over delays in the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement.

Among those concerns were that despite the UN recently confirming that they have received all of the individual weapons from FARC combatants and the FARC have announced their transition to a non-armed group "the government has failed to implement several areas of the peace agreement".

The government has not completed the 26 temporary zones where the FARC have been living since "the laying down of arms process. In August these zones will become reincorporation areas for FARC members after the decommission process".

Also the delay in releasing "almost 2000 FARC and other political prisoners even though the amnesty law, which is part of the peace agreement, was passed at the end of December 2016 is another area of concern" said Ballesteros before adding that "1400 FARC prisoners began a hunger strike on 26th June in protest against this situation, including FARC commander Jesus Santrich".

While the international media focused, and still focuses largely on the peace accords signed by FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) the activities of the right wing death squads and drug cartels, threatened by the peace, continue.

According to Ballesteros, who was speaking through an interpreter, there are continued attacks and threats against activists.

Indeed since his release from prison in January 2017 Ballesteros has received 8 death threats, including threats against his daughter and partner.

He described how over the last year "150 civil society activists have been assassinated in Colombia".

"More than 50 killings have been carried out so far in 2017.

"There were 400 feminicides (see info box) during the last year. 140 environmental activists have been assassinated during the last 5 years.

"Since the 1980s 3000 Colombian trade unionists have been assassinated", stated the Colombian.

Ballesteros who is one of Colombia's best known trade union and opposition leaders reminded the Sinn Féin delegation that the economic, social and political exploitation and inequality that gave rise to the FARC and its guerilla war, still affected the lives of the majority of Colombian citizens and needed to be resolved.

He outlined how "the concentration of land ownership was second highest in the world. 1% of landowners have 66% of land. Colombia is the second most unequal country in the world, after Haiti. 10% of Colombia's richest people have 4 times the wealth of the country's poorest people.

"There are 7 million internally displaced people in the country, the highest in the world, more than in Iraq and Syria.

"Added to this there are 8 million of Colombia's working population exploited on informal and unstable work contracts, with little security or benefits. Only 4% of Colombian workers are unionised" declared Ballesteros.



## BRITISH DESK

## Seven Sinn Féin MPs in London

JUST five days after a watershed Westminster Election, the seven strong Sinn Féin MP Team hit the ground running as they landed in London on Tuesday 13th June for a two-day programme of engagement with political parties, civic leaders, and members of the Irish diaspora.

The MP Team met with representatives from all the major political parties in Westminster to express concerns around any potential deal struck between the Tories and the DUP.

The visit received considerable media coverage and attention. At a press conference, hosted by the Foreign Press Association, the British Media Outlets were out in force - demonstrating the peaked level of interest of the British Commentariat in Irish politics. The conference was also attended by correspondents from around the world including: Germany's Die Zeit, France's Le Monde, Italy's la Repubblica, Spain's El Mundo, Canada's The Globe and Mail, China's Xinhua, and Japan's Kyodo News - amongst others.

The final engagement of the visit was a public meeting in the London Irish Centre in Camden. With just two days' notice



Back: South Down MP Chris Hazzard, Donegal TD Pearse Doherty. Front: West Tyrone MP Barry McElduff, Foyle MP Elisha McCallion, West Belfast MP Paul Maskey, Fermanagh South Tyrone MP Michelle Gildernew, Newry Armagh MP Mickey Brady and Mid Ulster MP Francie Molloy.

over 100 people came out to meet the seven new MPs.

Sinn Féin MPs are committed to hon-

ouring the resounding mandate they received in the election. They will not take seats in the British Parliament.

## Mickey Brady MP in Glasgow for Cairde na hÉireann's 'International Solidarity Conference'

MICKEY Brady MP was in Glasgow on 8th July for an "International Solidarity Conference" organised and hosted by Cairde na hÉireann. Mr Brady spoke alongside Mick Napier - of the Scottish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign - and a Basque language activist.

Mr Brady thanked Cairde na hÉireann for the invitation to speak and commended them on their "invaluable work in advocating and advancing the cause of Irish National self-determination here in Scotland."

Mr Brady told the conference: "I'm proud to say that internationalism has always formed a core component of what it means to be an Irish republican. I consider myself an internationalist. As Hugo Chávez once put it: "No part of the human community can live entirely on its own planet, with its own laws of motion, and cut off from the rest of humanity." This is how we in Sinn Féin see it." He extended Sinn Féin's continued solidarity to the causes of the Basque and Palestinian people.

He concluded, saying: "we cannot sit idle waiting for a true Irish republic to appear - and nor can we stand still and ig-



nore global injustice, poverty, and oppression. We cannot remain silent in a world where one half lives in plenty while the others scrapes for an existence for their families. Sinn Féin will continue to highlight such injustices, will ensure that in all our dealings with the international community - we aim to keep Ireland's voice at the centre of global justice."



## BRITISH DESK

## Francie Molloy MP meets former Cuban diplomat Carlos Alzugaray

ON 26 June, Francie Molloy MP attending a briefing in London with Dr Carlos Alzugaray, former Cuban diplomat, writer and academic. The meeting was hosted by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC).

Dr Alzugaray gave an update on Cuba-US relations following the change in Cuba policy announced by President Trump.

Following the briefing Mr Molloy said, "It's important to remember that the blockade of Cuba continues. It is still firmly in place. President Obama only ever tinkered with it. I was interested to hear Dr Alzugaray outline the huge potential for Cuba's tourism market if the blockade was lifted. As was said in the meeting 1.5 million Canadians - 3.5 per cent of the population - visit Cuba each year. If 3.5 per cent of US citizens could travel freely to Cuba like Canadians, this could potentially result in up to 15 million US tourists annually. This would surely be of benefit to both countries."

He continued, "I was pleased to once again extend Sinn Féin's solidarity to the



Francie Molloy, meeting Cuban diplomat Carlos Alzugaray

Cuban people. Whatever hurdles the new US administration might pose – I have faith that the Cuban people can overcome."

## Gerry Adams TD extends condolences to family and friends of Kevin McNamara

SINN Féin President Gerry Adams TD has expressed his deep sadness at the death of Kevin McNamara.

The Sinn Féin leader extended his "sincerest condolences to Kevin McNamara's wife Nora, his children, family circle and many friends.

Gerry Adams said:

"Ba mhaith liom mo chomhbhrón a thaispáint le clann Kevin McNamara an fad.

"I was deeply saddened to learn of Kevin's death.

"In his long and distinguished career in the British Parliament Kevin was well known for his outspoken criticism of many aspects of British policy in the North and in defence of human rights.

"He advocated for closer greater cooperation and harmonisation between the North and South; supported the efforts to establish the peace process, and was well known for his support for Irish unity.

"To his wife Nora and his four children, I want to extend Sinn Féin condolences on his death."

**Kevin McNamara at Liverpool  
1916 commemoration committee event**



# Pat Sheehan welcomes agreement that ends Palestinian hunger strike

SINN Féin MLA Pat Sheehan today welcomed the agreement between the leadership of the Palestinian prisoners movement, led by Marwan Barghouti, and the Israeli administration at Ahkelon prison after a 41 day hunger strike.

Pat Sheehan stated:

"Sinn Féin have received direct communication from the Palestinian 'Commission of Detainees & Ex Detainees' (CDA) in Ramallah outlining the agreement which was reached between the leadership of the Palestinian hunger strikers, Marwan Barghouti and the Israeli administration.

"Sinn Féin welcomes this agreement and the conclusion of the 41 day hunger strike by over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons.

"The agreement deals with many important issues on the treatment of Palestinian prisoners including human right violations, family contact and facilities, and the provision of proper medical care.

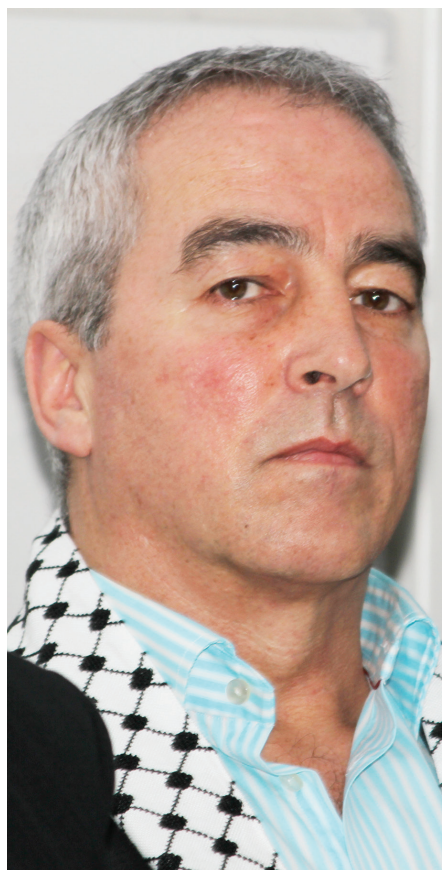
"It has also been agreed to continue negotiations on issues that remain unresolved.

"It is clear this is a crucial development for the prisoners and one which we totally support. However, it is equally important that the Israeli administration implements in full the Ahkelon agreement and positively concludes negotiations on the outstanding issues.

"Sinn Féin commends the resolve and commitment of the Palestinian hunger strikers, and their families, and wishes them a speedy return to full health.

"There is a responsibility on the international community to ensure the Israeli administration ends all human right violations in the Middle East.

"Neither the illegal building of Israeli



West Belfast MLA Pat Sheehan

settlements nor the mistreatment of Palestinian prisoners will resolve the conflict. Israel needs to be held to account for their actions.

"Sinn Féin will continue to support the rights of Palestinian prisoners and the legitimate demand of their people to nationhood and freedom based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital."



Sinn Féin Deputy Leader  
Mary Lou McDonald TD

## Government must recognise Palestinian statehood without further delay

- Mary Lou McDonald TD

SINN Féin Deputy Leader Mary Lou McDonald today addressed the Rally for Palestine in Dublin City Centre.

Speaking at the rally Teachta McDonald said Ireland has a history of colonisation and dispossession and should lead in the demand for justice for Palestine and called on the new government to recognise Palestinian statehood without further delay.

She said;

"We are here outside the Israeli Embassy and we are here to say in one voice that we demand justice, peace, nationhood and basic rights for Palestinian people in their homeland.

"We are fifty years on from the annexation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and we have had fifty years of injustice. It has to end.

"Ireland is a country that knows a lot about colonisations and dispossession because we suffered it here too. So I think that Ireland should lead in the demand for justice for Palestine.

"Leo Varadkar's incoming government must move to formally recognise Palestinian statehood without further delay."



## Anderson condemns plans to expand illegal Israeli settlements

SINN Féin MEP Martina Anderson has condemned Israeli plans to continue with the construction of illegal settlements on Palestinian land.

Martina Anderson said:

"Israel is continuing with the construction of illegal settlements on Palestinian land with plans to build 1,800 new houses in occupied East Jerusalem.

"Not only will this involve the building of new illegal settle-



ments but it could also involve the demolition of existing Palestinian homes.

"These Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they are being built on occupied territory.

"Israel's action is depriving the Palestinian people of their most basic rights.

"The hypocrisy of Israel's actions was recently highlighted when Israeli authorities seized

solar panels from a Palestinian village which were donated by the Dutch government as they did not have the required permits yet at the same time illegal Israeli settlements are connected to the electricity grid.

"Israel cannot be allowed to continue to deny Palestinians their rights, Israeli aggression and illegal settlement construction must be brought to an end."

## O'Neill condemns Barcelona slaughter

SINN Féin leader in the north Michelle O'Neill has condemned the Barcelona attack as a 'horrific attack on men, women and children'.

Expressing sympathy and solidarity with the families of those killed and injured, Michelle O'Neill said:

"The horrific attack in Bar-



celona was an appalling and indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children.

"The scale of the devastation caused is heart-breaking.

"It is sickening to think that people deliberately set out to kill and maim people who were simply out enjoying a

summer evening in one of the world's most beautiful and welcoming cities.

"My thoughts are with the families and friends of all those who have lost loved ones and those who were injured, as well as the emergency services who attended the scene."

## South Dublin County Council to fly the flag of Palestine - Cllr Enda Fanning

South Dublin County Council has this afternoon voted to fly the flag of Palestine for a month in solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine. Following a motion put forward by Sinn Féin Councillor Enda Fanning, who represents the Templeogue-Terenure area, the Council voted to support the proposal.

South Dublin Council becomes the fourth Irish local authority to fly the flag of Palestine following in the footsteps of Councils in Dublin City, Galway and Sligo who have already agreed to do so.

Speaking following the vote, Cllr. Fanning said:

"I am delighted with today's vote in solidarity with the people of Palestine. It might seem like a very small gesture but I know from the reaction to similar decisions made by other Councils, that today's vote will be applauded across Palestine and elsewhere.

"It is only three short years this week since the murderous Israeli onslaught on Gaza, which lasted for seven weeks, began in the summer of 2014. Sometimes it is hard to believe that it even happened as it has been virtually wiped from the memories of the world's politicians and media.

"The Palestinian people still suffer today from the after effects of that onslaught of terror when the world stood idly by. Let us not forget that millions upon millions of EU citizens' money, including Irish money, had been invested in Palestinian infrastructure only for the EU to stand aside as it was blown apart by Israel's offensive into Palestine.



"What our Council has done today sends a small message of solidarity to the people of Palestine. The flag will fly on the Council's County Hall building in Tallaght for the next month.

"It is an indication to the Palestinian people that many support their cause across the globe and look forward to day that there is a Free Palestine."



Sinn Féin spokesperson of Foreign Affairs, Seán Crowe TD

## Colombian Government must deliver on its peace agreement obligations – Crowe

SINN Féin Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Seán Crowe TD has welcomed the UN announcement that they have received all individual arms from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) combatants and that the FARC has announced it is no longer an armed group.

Teachta Crowe has called on the Colombian Government to deliver its side of the peace agreement and to urgently resolve its outstanding obligations, including the release of all qualifying prisoners.

Deputy Seán Crowe said:

“I welcome that the UN has announced that FARC combatants have handed over all their individual weapons. The FARC leadership have declared that they are no longer an armed group and have moved to become a non-armed political organisation.

“This historic move comes 53 years after the war in Colombia began and is a hugely significant step in the peace

process.

“Colombia is at a crucial moment in its history and the Government must not squander this opportunity by dragging its feet and not living up to its own obligations under the peace process.

“I am conscious that Jesús Santrich, a senior FARC member and negotiator, is now on hunger strike in solidarity with the prisoners who still haven't been released under the early release mechanisms of the peace process.

“I understand there is huge frustration that the amnesty law isn't being fully implemented by the judiciary and most of the prisoners have yet to be freed.

“I want to reiterate my call at this delicate stage for the Colombia Government to urgently live up to its obligations under the peace process, implement the amnesty law, and release all qualifying prisoners.”

## Seán Crowe TD concerned at proposed new US restrictions on trade and travel to Cuba

SINN Féin spokesperson on Foreign Affairs Seán Crowe TD has expressed his mounting concern at the proposed new restrictions on trade and travel to Cuba that US President Donald Trump is supposedly due to announce in Miami.

Deputy Crowe said:

“Former US President Barack Obama oversaw a historic de-escalation and relaxation of the USA blockade of Cuba and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations.

“While such positive moves didn't fully lift the illegal and damaging blockade, a relaxation in some aspects of the blockade and the restoration of diplomatic relations was welcomed by countries around the world.

“I am extremely concerned over reports that President Trump is now proposing to reverse some of these positive steps by Presidential Directive and revert back to the USA's failed aggressive approach to Cuba and its people.

“It is reported that these new Trump measures will involve further restrictions on trade and travel to Cuba.

“While it is also reported that diplomatic relations will remain in place, normal relations between two sovereign independent countries cannot exist while one is kept under an unfair and brutal blockade.

“In a clear statement of international support to Cubans suffering under the blockade, no country, including the USA, voted against a UN General Assembly motion in October 2016 calling on the USA to lift its blockade of Cuba.

“Instead of reversing the positive moves made to relax the embargo, President Trump should unilaterally and unconditionally lift this illegal and inhumane embargo.

“The Irish Government needs to raise its voice in support of the Cuban people and against this hostile escalation from President Trump and his Administration.”



## Sinn Féin Ard Fheis to take place in November - Declan Kearney MLA

SINN Féin National Chairperson Declan Kearney MLA has confirmed today that the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis will take place on Friday and Saturday 17th and 18th of November in the RDS, Dublin.

Speaking today Mr Kearney said;

"Since the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis last met politics on this island has changed dramatically. Brexit, and its impact on Ireland, dominates the news headlines and Irish Unity is now firmly on the national and international political agenda.

"Sinn Féin believes there is now an unprecedented opportunity to begin a strategic discussion on the transition to a new, agreed, united Ireland built upon reconciliation and equality.

"In the North Sinn Féin has fought two elections, increasing our support in both. Our focus is now firmly on getting the institutions back up and running on the basis of equality, respect and integrity. A rights based society with anti-sectarianism at its heart is the only credible and sustainable way forward for politics in the North.

"In the South the new Fine Gael led Government, supported by Fianna Fáil, has actually allowed the health and housing crises to escalate further.

"While the new Taoiseach, Mr Varadkar, presents a hip new image to the public, the reality is that more families are facing homelessness and more patients are waiting longer to be treated. There is also an

urgent need for comprehensive reform of the political system and public institutions such as An Garda Síochána.

"Sinn Féin is holding this government to account and we will contest any future general election seeking a mandate to be in government and implement policies to resolve these crises.

"All of these issues will be debated at our upcoming Ard Fheis which will be held in the RDS in Dublin on Friday and Saturday 17th and 18th of November.

"This year we also lost our much loved comrade and leader Martin McGuinness, and thousands of Party members and supporters will take the opportunity at this Ard Fheis to pay tribute to his huge legacy."

## Huge crowds attend National Hunger Strike Commemoration in Ballina

THOUSANDS travelled from across the country for the National Hunger Strike Commemoration which took place in Ballina over the weekend.

The main event took place in Ballina on Sunday, when 6,000 to 7,000 people gathered at Diamond's Car Park to mark the thirty-sixth anniversary of the H-Block Hunger Strikes.

The commemoration also honoured the Mayo men who died on hunger strikes, including Ballycroy man Jack McNee-la, who died along with Headford man, Tony D'Arcy in 1940; Ballina man Michael Gaughan, who died in 1974; and and Frank Stagg from Hollymount, who died in 1976.

The main event was attended by Sinn Féin President Ger-



**Pictured leading the 2017 National Hunger Strike Commemoration in Ballina, from left: President of Mayo Sinn Féin, Tara Bleeks-Kennedy; Gerry Kelly, MLA; Charal Ni Chuilín, MLA; Senator Rose Conway Walsh; Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams; Michelle O'Neill, MLA and Mayo Cllr Gerry Murray.**

ry Adams, and the keynote speakers included Erris-based Sinn Féin Senator Rose Conway-Walsh and Sinn Féin MLA Gerry Kelly, who was on hunger strike with Michael Gaughan.

It was the first time the National Hunger Strike Commemoration has been held in Mayo, and Senator Conway-Walsh said she was honoured to welcome the families

of those who died to Ballina and Mayo.

Referencing the three Mayo men to die on hunger strike, Senator Conway-Walsh said they did not take the actions they did in order to die but to further the struggle for Irish unity.

As well as the main gathering on Sunday afternoon, there were also a number of events over the weekend, including a hunger-strike discussion last Friday night in the Great National Hotel in Ballina. Senior Lecturer in History in UL, Dr Rúan O'Donnell, spoke on the hunger strikes of Jack McNee-la, Michael Gaughan and Frank Stagg, while Danny Morrison spoke on the 1980 and 1981 H-Block hunger strikes.



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