

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO PIRA ANNOUNCEMENT**

Christmas is a season of peace and goodwill, so any announcement that killing and maiming is to stop, even if only for a few days, is welcome news. This will, however, bring little comfort to families who are facing this Christmas without a loved one killed in the name of a cause which has no relevance for the Ireland or Europe of today. Equally it is of little comfort to those whose churches, homes, schools and workplaces have been destroyed by bombs and who are celebrating Christmas against the backdrop of wrecked churches and homes.

The people of Northern Ireland want peace. If the IRA is serious in sharing that wish, then let them prove it by maintaining this suspension indefinitely and giving up violence for good. That is what we all want - that would truly set the stage for a happy New Year. If they cannot face that challenge, the people, north and south, can only conclude that the IRA's real Christmas message came earlier this month in Belfast and Craigavon.

Note: The PIRA announcement was as follows:

"As of midnight on Monday, Active Service Units of the IRA will be instructed to suspend hostile military operations for a period of 72 hours. This temporary suspension of operations will cover the period 24, 25 and 26 December".

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STATEMENT FROM THE IRA

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This will, however, bring little comfort to families who are facing this Christmas without a loved one, killed in the name of a cause which has no relevance for the Ireland or Europe of today.

Equally, it is of little comfort to those whose churches, homes, schools and workplaces have been destroyed by bombs and who are celebrating Christmas against the backdrop of wrecked churches and homes.

The people of the IRA is serious in stating that it will prove it by continuing this campaign until it has set the stage for a happy new year. If they challenge the people, north and south, can only the IRA's real Christmas message be heard in Belfast and Craigavon.

- Ucc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
- PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Ledlie - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Wilson - B
- Mr Alston - B
- Mr Deverell - B
- Mr Wood (L&B) - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Percival - B

10/10 - 04  
13/12/91

(given to media 9pm tonight)