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**UNITED IRELAND**

# Nollaig shona daoibh - Hope on the darkest day

## A Letter from Ireland

A Chara,

I'm writing this letter on December 21st. This is one of my favorite days of the year. I am clearing my desk and looking forward to Christmas. It is also the winter solstice. The shortest day of the year. A significant date in the Celtic calendar. It marks the high point of winter. The days will get longer as we head towards Spring. It is a time of hope on the darkest day.

This week in Ireland, there were signs of hope in the political process. The British Government called time on the endless negotiations with the DUP. It is decision time for the DUP. The drift, the blocking of government formation, the suspension of the Good Friday Agreement North/South institutions, and the denial of democracy must end.

It remains to be seen if the DUP will lift their blockade of government and return to working with the other parties. I hope they do. But if not, and the negotiations are over, then there is an onus on the two governments to agree on the way ahead in terms of North/South working and oversight of the operation of government in the North.

The hope of justice was also held out to those bereaved in the conflict. This year the British Government introduced legislation that would end the rights of families to access the court, inquests, or police investigations into the killing of their loved ones.

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The legislation was opposed by all victim groups and political parties, the Irish government, and human rights bodies in the EU and the UN. It was a unilateral breach of the Good Friday and Stormont House Agreements.

Yesterday the Irish Government announced that it would take an interstate case in the European Court against the British Government's actions. The British government might ignore all others, but they cannot ignore the courts.

The legal process will take a couple of years to come to a judgment. It is an election year in Britain. The case will likely land on the desk of a new British Prime minister. The Labour leader and bookies' favorite to win, has said that he will revoke the legislation.

The actions of the Irish government offer hope to families who have campaigned for decades for justice. Either the British Government will revoke this legislation and return to honor their agreements or the court will adjudicate.

Over the past two years, Irish American organizations have campaigned against this legislation. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Brehon Law Society, the Irish American Unity Conference all hosted seminars and Zoom meetings with political parties, congressional leaders, and victims groups. This week demonstrates the power of activism. The triumph of hope against all odds.

Have a Merry Christmas. Nollaig shona daoibh.

Is mise,

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

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## Irish Government to take interstate case against the UK over Legacy Bill

**"We will stand with those families as they challenge this cruel and cynical law." - McDonald**

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statement today, he said, "The decision by the British government not to proceed with the 2014 Stormont House Agreement and instead pursue legislation unilaterally, without effective engagement with the legitimate concerns that we, and many others, raised left us with few options.

"The British government removed the political option, and has left us only this legal avenue."

"The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Ireland law is a specific and fundamental requirement of the Good Friday Agreement. Since the UK legislation was first tabled, the Government have been consistent that it is not compatible with the Convention.

"I used every opportunity to make my concerns known, and urged the British government to pause this legislation."

Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald responded saying, "I welcome confirmation that the Irish Government will take an interstate case to challenge the British Government's Legacy Act under the European Convention on Human Rights.

"Victims and families have been stating from the outset that this cruel and shameful Act is a flagrant breach of international human rights law.

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## British Government calls halt to talks

The British Government today said that talks with the DUP had reached an end point. It is now decision time for the DUP.

The DUP has blocked the operation of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement for two years. This has left the people of the north without a government.

Today in a meeting with party leaders, the British Government made a final financial offer in the event of a government being formed.

They also stated that their negotiations with DUP on issues around the application of post Brexit trading relations had ended.

Following the meeting the British appointed Secretary of State held a press conference in which he made clear that the timing for talking was up and it was now time for a decision.

Sinn Féin Vice President, First Minister Elect, Michelle O'Neill said, "It is decision time for the DUP. The endless two-way negotiation between the DUP and British Government is now concluded, and clarity has been brought to this matter today by London.

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"People deserve Government, and public sector workers deserve fair pay.

There is no alternative to power-sharing on the basis of equality."

Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald said, "It is decision time for the DUP.

"The endless two-way negotiation between the DUP and British Government is now concluded, and clarity has been brought to this matter today by London.

"It is time to move forward and form an Executive."



## December Video Update

Sinn Féin Representative to North America, Ciarán Quinn provides an update about the latest events in Ireland - Legacy Act, the Assembly, events, and more.

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# Government's inter-state human rights case against British Government

As news of the Irish Government's decision to legally challenge the Northern Ireland Legacy Act under the European Convention of Human Rights, Irish American organizations who have been steadfast in their opposition to the Act welcomed and applauded the move.

[Read responses from the Brehon Law Societies of New York and Nassau County and the Irish American Unity Conference here.](#)



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## workers high and dry' – Murphy



Sinn Féin MLA Conor Murphy has said that tens of thousands of workers have been left high and dry, facing uncertainty over pay rises as a result of a failure of leadership at the very top of the DUP.

Conor Murphy said, “The DUP has today confirmed it will continue with its blockade of the political institutions, regardless of the consequences for public services, workers and families.

“What the public needed to see from Jeffrey Donaldson today was decisive action, not more excuses, and yet another failure to take decisions in the best interests of everyone here.

“The cruel reality for tens of thousands of public sector workers and their families is that they now face uncertainty on whether they will get a pay rise.

“Teachers, health workers, transport workers and civil servants will all be forced to take to the streets in the depths of winter over the coming weeks to campaign for fair pay.

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are entitled to this. Instead, the DUP have left workers high and dry on Christmas week. This is heartless.

“We should be meeting tomorrow to restore the Assembly, form an Executive and get local ministers back at their desk taking decisions on people’s future and to fix public services.

“The DUP is attempting to wash its hands of responsibility for these crises at a time when people from all sections of society are crying out for political leadership. They should end their blockade now and get back to work.”



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