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UNITED STATES
UNITED IRELAND

Internment

A letter from Ireland

a Chara,

This week marks the anniversary of the reintroduction of internment without trial in the North of Ireland in 1971.

Since the partition of Ireland in 1922, the British Unionist-controlled government in Stormont had interned Irish Republican prisoners in every decade up until the 1970s. My grandfather was interned in the 1940s, an uncle in the 1950's and two uncles in the 1970s. As a family, we knew the cost of the internment.

Following the establishment of the Northern State, the parliament of Stormont passed the Special Powers Act, which remained in force until the parliament was closed down in 1972.

The Special Powers Act conferred wide powers of arrest without warrant, search, and questioning. A Minister had the power to detain and intern without trial, hang, flog, prohibit coroners' inquests, and to make regulations, each with the force of a new law, without consulting the parliament in Stormont.

It was little wonder that Vorster, the South African Minister for Justice in the apartheid regime commented that he "would be willing to exchange all the (apartheid era) legislation for one clause of the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act."

On August 9th, 1971, a mass arrest operation was authorized by the old Stormont regime with the support of the British Government in London. It was given the grandiose name of Operation Demetrius.

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remaining number were imprisoned for an undetermined time without access to a trial based on uncorroborated and untested allegations and “intelligence”.

The target was Irish Republicans, but many evaded capture. Despite the sectarian assassination campaigns by pro-British loyalists, it would be February 1973 before any members of these groups would be targeted.

At the end of internment on December 5th, a total of 1,981 people were detained without trial; 1,874 were Catholic / Republican, including women prisoners held in Armagh Prison. Over the same period, 107 Protestant / Loyalists were interned.

The reintroduction of internment in 1971 was met with civil resistance and an increase in violence. The anti-internment march in Derry in January 1972 was attacked by British Paratroopers, and thirteen civil rights protesters were killed on the day, and one later from their injuries. It became known as Bloody Sunday.

I offer this not as a look back in anger but as a measure of how far we have traveled. The old Stormont regime that ordered the internment of my grandfather and uncles is gone. The pro-British unionist majority in Stormont is gone. Internment without trial is gone. The truth about Bloody Sunday is known.

Progress is measured by both how far we have come and how far we have yet to travel. The injustice and brutality imposed on internees have not been resolved, with the British government seeking to block legal cases against those illegally detained.

The Good Friday Agreement now means that Irish Unity is within reach. Remember the past and plan for a better future.

Have a great weekend.

Is mise,

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

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September 13, 2025

Date: September 13, 2025 @ 9:30 am

Location: Irish Hunger Memorial

Address: North End Ave &, Vesey St,
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Tiocfaidh ár lá

**Mary Lou McDonald in Belfast Telegraph:
“I want referendums on reunification in
this decade.”**

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of this decade.”

A United Ireland is the best idea for our future. We have to plan, prepare and work for that future together.

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McDonald: I want referendums on reunification in this decade

SF leader also believes next Irish president will be last before unity

NIAMH CAMPBELL

Mary Lou McDonald has remained tight-lipped on Sinn Féin's plans for the upcoming Irish presidency election, but believes that the new Uachtarán na hÉireann will be the last before a united Ireland.

Speaking to commentator Andree Murphy last night during this year's Féile an Phobail in west Belfast, the Sinn Féin leader said it is "crazy" that people in Northern Ireland cannot vote for the Irish president, adding that "there is no reason why it [a referendum on the issue] shouldn't go ahead".

"The idea that you can live in Belfast, and you could be a candidate in the election, you could be elected president as Mary McAleese was, but you can't vote, is crazy," she said.

"It smacks actually of a gerrymander. If we're all equal citizens, if every Irish citizen is equal, how on earth does anybody justify that discrimination? And especially for Irish citizens living in Ireland."

Ms Murphy asked if there was a danger that the issue of a referendum on the matter wouldn't be addressed again until the next time the presidential election comes around, in 2032, to which Ms McDonald replied: "No, but you see, this is where we need to remind ourselves.

"Our job is to end partition. I want us to have referendums on reunification in this decade, by the end of this decade, and I would hope, and I do believe, it's implausible that after another seven-year term, that actually we will be in a very, very different landscape," she said.

Many media outlets, commentators and columnists have debated whether Ms McDonald will herself be put forward for the election, in the hope of replacing current Uachtarán, Michael D Higgins, who was a member of the Labour Party and has been in the role for two terms since 2011.

When asked what Sinn Féin is doing about the presidency — which was met with laughter from the audience — the Dublin Central TD said: "We have options. We can run our own candidate. We can back another candidate.

"We've talked to our party membership in the base quite intensely. Those conversations are still evolving.

"I'm conscious that some might say the position of the Uachtarán is largely ceremonial and symbolic, and so on.

"I'm not sure that gives full recognition to the weight of the constitutional role. But at this point in our history, to me, it really matters that whoever is in the Aras is a person who speaks openly on the issue of Ireland's future reunification and the pathway for it."

The 2025 Irish presidential election is due to take place by November 11, and will determine the 10th president of the Republic.

The campaign for political parties will start next month.

Ms McDonald was also asked about her opinion on how unionism fits into



Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald (also below right) at the Féile in west Belfast last night

Kevin Scott

a united Ireland, and about controversy surrounding this year's bonfires on July 11.

Last month it emerged that a bonfire had been built on a site that contained asbestos.

"It's very hard to actually explain to people, especially internationally, what this is all about, and how it could be okay to have bonfires and asbestos in the same sentence, never mind in the same proximity," she said.

"It's never good for Ireland for news to go out of anything glorifying any form of sectarianism, whatever it might be.

"Those who are British now, in a partitioned Ireland, they will be British in a united Ireland. And actually, the question isn't so much for us, the question

is for the British system.

"We will need guarantees from the British state that they will honour that reality in terms of their papers, their passports, and access to whatever other rights entitlements or privileges might accrue to someone by virtue of being a British citizen.

"That will not be for the Irish state or for a reunited Ireland to confer on any individual, I absolutely respect it. If somebody is British, they are British. That's no threat to any of us."

When pressed on whether she comes across people in Dublin, or the Republic, who "don't care about reunification", Ms McDonald said she never has, adding: "I think we can decode that language of 'nobody cares', meaning those who believe that what they care about is the only thing that should be cared about, are comfortable with the status quo.

"Some are partitionists. I mean openly so. The thing that hits my ear really hard is when I hear the north described as a country, I mean, I just don't know. Language loses all meaning when you describe six counties of a historic, nine-county province as a country. I just wonder about that."



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Gerry Adams and Séanna Walsh 2005

Towards a New Ireland

2005 was a momentous year in the Irish peace process when Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams called on the IRA leadership to end its armed struggle. Months later former IRA POW Séanna Walsh was asked by the leadership of Óglaigh na hÉireann to read out a statement announcing the end of its armed struggle.

As part of Féile an Phobail both men joined together along with Máiread Farrell TD in front an audience of hundreds to talk about what led up to that momentous year and to look to the future.



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PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLIES

IN THE USA *By Ciaran Quinn and Greg O'Loughlin*

Toward the end of May, Pat Cullen MP for Fermanagh & South Tyrone, joined with Ciaran Quinn, Sinn Féin's Representative to the United States, and embarked on a tour of major cities in the USA. Their aim was to bring the 'Irish Unity People's Assembly for the Diaspora' to Nashville, Cincinnati, and Chicago.

These events, were aimed at updating Irish America and the diaspora on the political situation in Ireland and gathering feedback for the Commission on the Future of Ireland. They also emphasised the critical role of the diaspora in the work of achieving a united Ireland.

Nashville: Civil Rights and Political Exchange
The tour kicked off in Nashville, Tennessee, on May 28th at the Scarritt Bennett Center. It marking the first People's Assembly in the State. Before the main event, organizers provided a vital context by touring Nashville's civil rights landmarks, including Fisk University and The Civil Rights Room at the Nashville Public Library. This highlighted the city's rich history of activism and its relevance to contemporary struggles for self-determination.

Pat Cullen was welcomed at Nashville City Hall by Councilperson Emily Benedict, who provided a tour and introduced Cullen to local council members. This offered a unique opportunity to exchange experiences in electoral politics and public service.

Addressing an audience of seasoned activists, members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Ladies AOH, as well as curious learners, Cullen emphasized the historical significance of the moment, drawing parallels to the founding of America. She stated, "We are at the point at which the founding fathers of America found themselves after the British agreed to withdraw. The challenge to define a new nation."

She urged attendees to consider this "break from the past of division" and the "building of a shared future," inviting their input on the

opportunities and challenges of Irish unity. Following her address, Councilwoman Brenda Gadd interviewed Cullen about her inspiring journey as a labor leader, nurse, and activist, particularly her role in leading over 240,000 nurses on strike. The evening concluded with small group discussions focused on actionable steps towards Irish unity.

Cincinnati: Community and Nation-Building

The next stop on May 29th was the Irish Heritage Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, a vibrant community hub. Friends of Sinn Féin President Mark Guilfoyle opened the event, introducing Cullen as a leader whose roots in activism exemplify the evening's purpose.

Cullen highlighted the significant political shifts in Ireland, noting Sinn Féin's position as the largest party on the island and Michelle O'Neill's role as First Minister in the North. The Fermanagh South Tyrone MP explained that the Good Friday Agreement provides the pathway for unity, emphasizing: "The potential for Irish Unity is recognized... All has changed."

Cullen articulated the clear objective; "We need to secure and win unity referendums... We are engaged in a project of nation-building." She stressed the importance of a peaceful transition to a "new Ireland" that reconciles past differences and builds a home for everyone.

After her remarks and an interview, the attendees engaged in small group discussions, brainstorming strategies for activism and examining the roles of the Irish, British, and American governments in advancing unity. Ciarán Quinn concluded the evening by reminding the audience that Irish America's support was crucial for both the Good Friday Agreement and the future of a united Ireland.

Chicago: A Legacy of Activism
The tour concluded in Chicago, a city with deep historical ties to Ireland and a robust Irish American



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Mary Lou McDonald at Féile an Phobail

Speaking after her event at Féile an Phobail, Sinn Féin President Mary Lou

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tonight at Féile an Phobail where we discussed the immense opportunities presented by the ending of partition and the reunification of Ireland.

“It’s a future that calls for ambition, vision and determination. The preparations for positive constitutional change must start now.

“I believe we will see referendums on Irish Unity by the end of this decade. It’s the job of those of us who believe in a United Ireland to drive the conversation, to persuade more and more people, to keep building the incredible momentum to achieve unity in our time.”



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