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UNITED STATES UNITED IRELAND

Garvaghy Road

A letter from Ireland

a Chara,

Last Saturday night, through to the early hours of Monday morning, I stood vigil on the Garvaghy Road. We had received word that the courts had upheld the Parades Commission's decision to authorise an Orange Order march along this roadway, which bisects a small Catholic and Nationalist Community. We made our way to Portadown to support the residents and were joined by thousands of others.

The march was due at 8:00 am. We knew from experience that would mean the police would move in to clear the road around 6:00 am. We stood throughout the night. Just before dawn, the rain started. And still we stood.

I explained to some younger people what to expect. When you hear the signal, sit down on the road, link arms, put your glasses and phones in your pocket, expect the police to baton you off the road, move down to another section, get back on the road, and repeat.

The rain intensified; rumours spread that the police were about to move in, dawn broke, and hours passed. We were soaked, cold, tired and expectant, but we stood firm. We passed the designated march time. Word came through that the Orange Order was still assembled at Drumcree Church with the police in place to force a march through. We knew we were in for a long wait. The rain passed, the sun came up, and thankfully a friend brought dry clothes. The crowd swelled and has remained there over the past week. Resolute and determined.

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police had beaten peaceful protesters off the road. Images of RUC officers gleefully wading into the protesters were beamed across the world. Within a few years, the RUC would be disbanded and replaced by the PSNI as part of the peace process. In 1998, the Orange Order, Unionist political leaders, and paramilitaries mobilised tens of thousands to lay siege to this small community. Violent protests in support of the Orange Order were held throughout the North. By the end of the week, their supporters firebombed a house belonging to a Catholic family, burning three young children to death.

The violence subsided. Many of the protestors returned home. Yet the Orange Order continued its demand to march through the community. In 1999, Unionist paramilitaries killed the residents' association solicitor, Rosemary Nelson, leaving behind her young family.

In total, twenty-one people were killed by unionists in support of the Orange Order in the period between 1996 and 1999. The community carries those scars.

The Orange Order is a Protestant and Unionist organisation. You cannot be a member if you are a Catholic, married to a Catholic, and can be disciplined if you even attend the funeral of a Catholic. Thousands of Orange Order marches happen every year, and they are uncontroversial.

The Orange Order has an alternative route to bypass the Garvaghy Road, but they refuse to take it. After 28 years of relative peace on the Garvaghy Road, the Parades Commission inexplicably authorised a march to proceed. A decision that has brought us back to the streets. The largest unionist party, the DUP, is standing side by side with the Orange Order. In 1998, the Orange Order mobilised thousands of unionists.

That has been absent this year. Many across the community recognise the benefits of peace and are alarmed that an issue thought resolved 26 years ago is now back in the news and on the streets.

There are those who hope to drag us back to the days of Unionist superiority, of conflict and sectarianism. This weekend shows we are not going back to 1998; we are moving forward.

The British Secretary of State can ban this parade and end the threat against this community. The question he has to answer is: does he want to compound a bad

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take the alternative route and let the community of the Garvaghy Road live in peace?

Until the Secretary of State acts, we will continue to stand resolute and determined in defence of a small community, peace and progress.

Is mise,

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

Live Call - Friday, Oct 2 - 1:00pm ET - Update on the Garvaghy Rd

Join us on Friday, October 2 at 1:00pm ET for a special live call with John Finucane MP and Cllr. Catherine Nelson. They will provide an update on the latest situation and discuss ways to support the Garvaghy Road residents and community. It is a free call and all are welcome. [Register here.](#)

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URGENT ACTION.

**LIVE CALL WITH
JOHN FINUCANE MP &
CLLR CATHERINE NELSON**

Join us for an update about the
situation on the Garvaghy Road.
All are welcome - registration required.
Fri, Oct 2, 2026 at 1:00pm ET on Zoom

**NO
GOING
BACK!**

WE STAND WITH GARVAGHY ROAD RESIDENTS



WATCH: Pat Sheehan MLA Reflects on 45th Anniversary of the end of the 1981 Hunger Strike

Sat, Oct 3 2026 marks the 45th anniversary of the end of the 1981 Hunger Strikes. To mark the day, we are excited to premier an exclusive interview with Pat Sheehan MLA. Pat was on hunger strike for 55 days when it was ended. Do not miss it on our

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US Congressional Friends of Ireland call on Chris Bryant to “cancel Orange Order parade”

On Thursday, a bipartisan group of United States Congresspeople sent a letter to the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Chris Bryant, warning him that, “Without decisive action, we risk reopening one of the most painful chapters of Northern Ireland’s history and undermining nearly three decades of peace, stability, and reconciliation made possible by the Good Friday Agreement.”

The Congressional Friends of Ireland Caucus, a bipartisan group co-chaired by Democrat Richard Neal from Massachusetts and Republican Mike Kelly from Pennsylvania sent the letter this morning. It continued, “we respectfully urge you to put a stop to this march. Failing to intervene and allowing this contentious parade to move forward would risk undermining the progress that has been painstakingly built over the past three decades. As a guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, the United States has a vested interest in seeing the principles embodied in the accord

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It was one of many letters sent from around the world and across the country in support of the residents of Garvaghy Road. [Read more letters here.](#)

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2026

The Right Honourable Sir Chris Bryant MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Office
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ
United Kingdom

Dear Secretary of State Bryant,

As Members of the Friends of Ireland Caucus, we respectfully urge you and the Government of the United Kingdom to cancel the Orange Order parade on Garvaghy Road. Without decisive action, we risk reopening one of the most painful chapters of Northern Ireland's history and undermining nearly three decades of peace, stability, and reconciliation made possible by the Good Friday Agreement.

Over the last three decades, the progress made on the island of Ireland has been nothing short of extraordinary. Twenty-eight years have passed since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and a generation has grown without a single memory of the Troubles. Whether they realize it or not, their hopes and aspirations will forever be shaped by years of tireless diplomacy that have brought us to this moment.

It was that same 28-year period that saw the end of the controversial Orange Order marches on Garvaghy Road in a majority-Catholic area of Portadown. During the Troubles, these parades became a symbol of the sectarian tensions, public disorder, and violence that once threatened Northern Ireland's peace. The Parades Commission has prevented the proposed march down Garvaghy Road year after year, and for good reason. This march harkens back to decades of sectarian rule and the divisions that defined one of the darkest periods in Ireland's history. For those who have dedicated their lives to achieving peace and stability, allowing this march to proceed would reopen wounds that have yet to fully heal. For the next generation, who want nothing more than peace, prosperity, and a shared future, this would represent a marked step backward.

This is a consequential moment on the island of Ireland, which is why we respectfully urge you to put a stop to this march. Failing to intervene and allowing this contentious parade to move forward would risk undermining the progress that has been painstakingly built over the past three decades. As a guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, the United States has a vested interest in seeing the principles embodied in the accord upheld, ensuring the gains we have achieved can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Hundreds of Protestants Sign Open Letter to Secretary of State for Northern

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Hundreds of Protestants have signed an open letter to British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Chris Bryant MP and Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Helen McEntee TD, calling on them to intervene to “spare the residents of the Garvaghy Rd a return to the fear they endured,” for so long.

The letter states, “We value the peace and progress built since the 1998 Agreement. We want our children and grandchildren to inherit a future free from the anguish of the past, and we are anxious that some now seem willing to reopen old wounds.”

As of 10:00pm ET on Thursday, October 1, there were more than 400 signatures and growing. You can read the full letter below.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)*Northern Ireland, and Helen McEntee TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade*

1 October 2026

Dear Secretary of State and Minister,

We write as a group of concerned individuals from a Protestant background. We hold a wide range of views on politics, faith and identity, and no single label captures our diversity. But we are committed to our shared society, and we feel compelled to speak publicly about what is happening in Portadown.

We value the peace and progress built since the 1998 Agreement. We want our children and grandchildren to inherit a future free from the anguish of the past, and we are anxious that some now seem willing to reopen old wounds.

While we recognise that the Portadown District LOL regard Drumcree as unfinished business, we are distressed by the trauma that is being visited on the residents of the Garvaghy Road after 28 years of calm. This is a community that has suffered deeply and still lives with the legacy of the parading disputes of the 1990s, which cost lives and left lasting scars.

Many of us have family and friends for whom parading is a valued tradition, and some of us have been directly involved ourselves. We recognise its importance to many in our community. The vast majority of loyal order parades take place each year without restrictions - an outcome enabled by agreements and arrangements reached after exhaustive efforts. All of that is now being called into question, with potentially devastating consequences far beyond Portadown.

We appeal to the Orange Order to look towards the bigger picture and bring this impasse to an end in the interests of our entire community.

We urge the British and Irish Governments to act together and without delay: to restore stability, to ensure that the parading framework is robust and trusted, and to spare the residents of the Garvaghy Road a return to the fear they endured for so many summers.

This is a time when all of us committed to a better future have a responsibility to raise our voices to protect peace, progress and a shared society free from sectarianism.

We must avoid the abyss we are currently staring into. For the future of our children and grandchildren, we cannot go backwards.

Yours sincerely,

28 Years Ago This Week: Legal Representative for Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition Rosemary Nelson Testified Before U.S. Congress

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Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations of the US House of Representatives.

In her testimony, which was broadly focused on the “United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Mission of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers”, Rosemary Nelson said, “This behavior on the part of RUC officers has worsened over the past 3 years and, most particularly, since I began to represent the residents of the Garvaghy Road area in Portadown.

[READ FULL STORY HERE](#)

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Irish Americans Want a United Ireland

President Trump's comment that he hopes to see a united Ireland seems to have caught both the British and Irish Governments off guard. I was surprised and amused when he made the announcement while sitting beside Taoiseach Micheál Martin, who over the summer was quoted as saying that talk of Irish Unity drives him "bananas". The truth is, for anyone willing to listen, Irish America supports Irish Unity. The President, un beholden to the current British or Irish Government, stated the obvious:

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Over the past two years, I have crisscrossed the US speaking at Friends of Sinn Féin Unity Commissions and engaging with our diaspora. The message coming back has been clear and consistent—a pride in the US role in the Good Friday Agreement and the peace it has delivered.

There is a shared hope for a new and united Ireland and a recognition that we now have the opportunity to achieve it.

That Agreement, endorsed by the people of Ireland, North and South, includes the right to self-determination. It provides a peaceful and democratic pathway to Irish Unity; if the people agree to end division in referendums in the North and South, then our country will be united.

[READ FULL STORY HERE](#)

NEW - Virtual Irish Unity People's Assembly for the Diaspora

Join us on Sunday, October 25th at 12:00 noon ET for a special virtual Irish Unity People's Assembly for the Diaspora. We will be joined by Conor Murphy - Member of the Seanad Éireann, The Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and former Minister for the Economy.

This is a live, interactive Assembly with Q&A, small group discussions and more. It is free and all are welcome - registration link in bio.

[REGISTER NOW!](#)

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ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND



Sunday, October 25, 2026

12:00pm Noon ET

Virtual - Zoom

Conor Murphy

Member of the Seanad Éireann

Oireachtas Committee on the

Implementation of the

Good Friday Agreement.

Former Minister for the Economy

AN COIMISIÚN
UM THODHCHAÍ
NA hÉIREANN

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