



September 17, 2021

Dr. Amanda L. Sloat
Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Europe
National Security Council

Michael J. Murphy
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Re: Amnesty International USA calls on President Biden to raise concerns with Prime Minister Johnson regarding the UK government's Northern Ireland legacy proposal

Dear Dr. Sloat and Deputy Assistant Secretary Murphy:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA, we are writing to draw your attention to the plans announced by the UK government on July 14, 2021 to introduce a statute of limitations and remove all legal remedies relating to human rights abuses that occurred during the Northern Ireland "Troubles," and to urge President Biden to express concern during his meeting with Prime Minister Johnson next week.

The UK government's proposals for dealing with the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland amount to a de facto amnesty for security forces of the United Kingdom and other perpetrators of human rights violations and will close all paths to justice for victims. These plans have been unequivocally rejected by the [Irish government](#), [Northern Ireland political parties](#), [human rights organizations](#), including [Amnesty International](#), victims' groups, and many others.

In Amnesty's September 16 [submission to the UN Human Rights Council](#), we reiterated that the UK government's proposal breaches the UK's international and domestic human rights obligations, disregards the rights of victims, unduly interferes in the justice system, and undermines the rule of law, Good Friday Agreement, and the ongoing reconciliation process.

For decades, the UK government's piecemeal approach to dealing with the past has failed survivors and victims of human rights abuses in Northern Ireland as well as their families. Human rights organizations have long pressed authorities to institute credible mechanisms

capable of upholding the rights of victims. Instead, the UK government has declared its intent to introduce a statute of limitations and remove all remedies available under the law. If the UK government moves forward with its plans, many survivors of human rights abuses will hear the message that officials primary motivation is to ensure that state security forces are placed above the law and beyond accountability for the human rights abuses committed during the “Troubles”.

The UK government must reverse course and revert to bilateral agreements made with the Irish government and Northern Ireland political parties, including the Stormont House Agreement (SHA). The mechanisms proposed in SHA with some further efforts would discharge the UK’s human rights obligations and provide victims with truth and justice.

Amnesty International was heartened to hear Dr. Karen Donfried, President Biden’s nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary of European and Eurasian Affairs, express her support for the SHA during her confirmation hearing. We urge President Biden to use the opportunity of his meeting with Prime Minister Johnson to clearly communicate the U.S. government’s concern further to Downing Street’s proposed course of action.

Given the role of the U.S. continues to play in supporting the Good Friday Agreement and peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, we urge President Biden to:

1. Express human rights concerns regarding the UK government’s Northern Ireland legacy proposal during his meeting with Prime Minister Johnson,
2. Call on the UK government to abandon their unilateral approach to dealing with the legacy of the “Troubles,” revert to the Stormont House Agreement, and establish mechanisms to deal with the past that are in line with its human rights obligations,
3. Work with the UK and Irish governments to a ensure lasting and human rights-compliant resolution to the conflict in Northern Ireland capable of delivering the truth, justice, and accountability to which victims are entitled.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 509-8132 or dbalson@aiusa.org.

Sincerely,



Daniel Balson
Advocacy Director for Europe and Central Asia
Amnesty International USA