



PRESIDENT BIDEN VISIT A 'SPECIAL MOMENT' AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE

— Michelle O'Neill



First Minister Designate Michelle O'Neill described President Biden's visit to Ireland on the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement as a 'special moment' and said it is now time to look to the next 25 years with hope, opportunity and ambition.

President Joe Biden gave an address at the new Ulster University campus in Belfast before given an historic address in the Oireachtas.

Speaking after the Sinn Féin leadership met with the US President in Belfast and Dublin, Michelle O'Neill said:

"President Biden's visit to Ireland cements our close bonds of friendship and our partnership for peace and prosperity with the United States of America.

"To have him come to Belfast to mark 25 years of peace and the signing of the Good Friday Peace Accord of 1998 and to address both houses of the Oireachtas is a special moment.

"This historic peace accord which was painstakingly negotiated at that time was made possible due to the vast and substantial contribution from the United States under the administration of President Clinton.

"As we look back with pride at just how far we have all come, and all that has been achieved, we also look forward with hope, ambition, and opportunity for the next twenty-five years.

"I welcome the commitment of President Biden to this work through his appointment of Special Envoy Joe Kennedy III and I look forward to working with him now to deepen further US investment and economic growth to the

benefit of all our communities.

"We have developed close economic ties with US companies over the past two decades who have chosen the north as their gateway to Europe, creating thousands of good jobs.

"The new deal between Brussels and London gives us a huge competitive advantage as a gateway to Europe for the sale of goods to two of the world's largest markets unimpeded.

"We must use this opportunity to attract investment, create jobs for our young people, and together deliver the change people demand and rightfully deserve.

"Peace, stability and economic opportunity are all connected, and the onus is on the governments, parties and not least the DUP to restore the Executive and other GFA institutions so that we can push on and get back to business.

"As an incoming First Minister, I am absolutely determined to work with others to make politics work, and to serve every single citizen. It is time to form an Executive now to support workers, families and communities."

TRIBUTE: TOM 'DUTCH' HOLLAND



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Bill introduced to force Government to surrender shares in companies operating in occupied Palestinian territories



Sinn Féin TD, John Brady, has introduced a Bill designed to compel the Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to divest itself of holdings in companies operating within illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

John Brady said:

“The purpose of this Bill is to mandate the ISIF to divest all current assets and prohibit future investments in any companies which operate in the illegal Israeli settlements.

“It is my intention that this Bill will end Ireland’s involvement in Israel’s illegal enterprises, and act as a catalyst for other European countries to follow.

“The ISIF has invested Irish taxpayers’ money in nine companies operating within Israel’s illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

“It is important to note that ISIF investments include four Israeli banks instrumental in facilitating the ongoing campaign of annexation, through providing funding, loans, and the operation of ATMs in the illegal settlements.

“Through their actions the banks are aiding and abetting war crimes.

“By investing Irish taxpayers’ money



into companies breaching international law, the government has made the Irish people stakeholders in the ongoing illegal annexation of Palestinian territories.

“Israeli settlements, their maintenance and expansion, are illegal under international law and amount to war crimes.

“In addition, Israeli settlements have

resulted in a host of human rights violations against the Palestinian population, including the unlawful demolitions of homes and infrastructure, destruction of agricultural land, forced displacement, unlawful killings and more.

“The illegal settlements are a key component of Israel’s apartheid regime. Israel administers the territory under two entirely separate legal systems and sets of institutions.

“Israeli, European, and international business enterprises operating with or providing services to Israeli settlements, play

a critical role in sustaining and growing illegal settlements.

“Business enterprises directly or indirectly involved in the Israeli settlement enterprise run a substantial risk of involvement in grave violations of international humanitarian law and internationally recognised crimes.”



Sinn Féin leaders and US President Joe Biden – White House Guest Reception

St Patrick's Day – US visit

Sinn Féin President, Mary Lou McDonald TD, Vice-President, Michelle O'Neill MLA, and Conor Murphy MLA travelled to New York and Washington DC to attend the St Patrick's Day celebrations.

The visit provided an opportunity to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), and brief US leaders.

Reflecting on the visit, Mary Lou McDonald said:

“Our message in the US was one of hope and opportunity as we marked 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement; a peace accord that transformed the entire country.

“The role of the US Administration was critical 25 years ago in achieving peace, just as it was throughout the Irish Protocol negotiations, and will continue to be as we prepare for a referendum on Irish Unity.

“With the eyes of the world on Ireland once again, there is a huge opportunity to showcase our island and the real change that is underway.

“For many international partners, Ireland is the bridge to the European market and system.

“But to turn that opportunity into jobs and investment requires a functioning Executive.

“During the trip we were hosted by President Biden in the White House, attended the Speakers Lunch on Capitol Hill, and joined other events by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, IBEC and the newly appointed US Special Envoy, Joe Kennedy.”

During the visit, Michelle O'Neill addressed the National Press Club, hosted by Georgetown University, where she outlined her commitment to be a First Minister for All:



Michelle O'Neill MLA – The National Press Club, Georgetown University

“Nine months ago, the people voted in a democratic Assembly election, yet no power-sharing coalition government has yet been formed.

“The democratic outcome of that election must be respected.

“The onus is now on the British and Irish governments, the Stormont parties, not least the DUP, to get back to business and form a government to support workers and families.

“As the eyes of the world turn to Belfast once more, let's take this opportunity to attract investment, create jobs for our young people, and together deliver the change people demand and rightfully deserve.”



Declan Kearney MLA – Iruñea, Basque Country

NEW OPPORTUNITIES OPENED BY BASQUE PEACE PROCESS

Declan Kearney MLA travelled to the Basque Country over Easter weekend to participate in the annual 'Day of the Basque Homeland' events.

As part of the visit, the Sinn Féin National Chairperson addressed thousands who had gathered at a demonstration to mark the occasion; he said:

"Ireland and the Basque Country have an unbreakable historical friendship.

"Your peace process has opened a door to new opportunities for political unity among Basques to make strategic alliances.

"And importantly, achieving national democracy must always sit above political rivalries.

"Just as in Ireland, every side now carries responsibility to build the Basque peace process.

"To be clear, all Basque political prisoners should be released to re-join their families.

"And those in political exile should be allowed to return home.

"These are humanitarian priorities.

"Making these decisions is also the way to build political confidence, create trust, and to assist genuine political engagement.

"Friends, we are walking the same road to independence for both Ireland and the Basque Country.

"We will face many mountains in the future, but mountains are there to be conquered.

"Stay united and cohesive, be confident in your strategy."



Mary Lou McDonald TD, Arbour Hill, Dublin

1916 Easter Rising Commemorations

On Sunday 9th April, Sinn Féin leaders joined Irish President, Michael D. Higgins, and representatives from across Ireland at the GPO, Dublin to commemorate the 107th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising.

After attending the ceremony, Mary Lou McDonald TD addressed Sinn Féin's annual commemoration at Arbour Hill, Dublin.

The Sinn Féin President said:

"Arbour Hill carries the legacy of Ireland's proud revolutionary past and Ireland's hopeful promise of a better future, a future defined by equality, economic justice, full Irish freedom, and unity.

"In this decade, I believe we will see Irish unity referendums.

"To win these referendums, we

must reach out, create space for others and build alliances across society.

"We want to create a nation home for all our people, where everyone's rights are protected and advanced.

"A new Ireland based on the vision of Theobald Wolfe Tone, an enduring reconciliation and a real union between the Orange and the Green, and every community on this island.

"We seek to build the Irish nation anew. To end partition in our time. To unite our people and our country.

"That was the goal of Easter 1916. It is the goal now, and it will remain the goal until that day is achieved."

WAR IN UKRAINE – ONE YEAR ON

In February, Sinn Féin President, Mary Lou McDonald TD, addressed thousands gathered outside Dublin's GPO marking a year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, the Sinn Féin President said:

"For 12 long and painful months, the courageous people of Ukraine have resisted Russia's criminal invasion of their beloved homeland.

"Ireland stands with them against Vladimir Putin's attack on sovereignty, self-determination, and international law.

"We stand with Ukraine's right to endure as a free and peaceful nation.

"Putin must understand that the international community will remain united with Ukraine for however long it takes.

"Standing resolutely against the Putin invasion, the international community and international diplomacy must use all its muscle to end the war and begin the journey to peace."

"There can be no victory for Russian military aggression over Ukrainian sovereignty.

"No victory for a power that brazenly violates international law.

"Putin must immediately withdraw his army and end the invasion.

"Standing resolutely against the Putin invasion, the international community and international diplomacy must use all its muscle to end the war and begin the journey to peace.

"This must be a lasting peace based on the values of democracy, integrity, and the rule of international law."



Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald TD – GPO, Dublin

Adams welcomes President Clinton's call for the re-establishment of the institutions

Former Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams joined President Bill Clinton and leaders of seven leading Irish American organisations in New York to celebrate 25 years of the Good Friday Agreement.

Addressing a packed hall in Cooper Union Building on the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement in April, Mr. Adams said:

"We appreciate the work done by President Biden to defend the Good Friday Agreement. People in Ireland still need the White House to act as guarantor of the Agreement, as President Clinton did and as President Biden continues to do.

"And embedded into the Agreement is the right of the people of Ireland to decide our future.

"The people of Ireland have for the first time a peaceful way to end the union with England and to build our own future. No one should be allowed to take that right away from us."

Mr. Adams called on the Irish government to establish a Citizen's Assembly and spoke of the need for reconciliation and the protection of the rights of unionists. He said:

"The Irish government should establish a Citizen's Assembly or series of such Assemblies to discuss the process of constitutional change and the measures needed to build an all-Ireland economy, a truly national health service, education system and much more.

"We need national reconciliation in a citizen centred rights-based society including the rights of our unionist neighbours – and the Orange Order and other loyal institutions.

"The protections in the Good Friday Agreement are their protections also. The island of Ireland is their land, their home place. The unionists are our neighbours. We want them to be our friends. Sinn Féin is committed to upholding their rights and to working with them to make the island of Ireland a better place for everyone.

"The new Ireland planned and built by all of the people of the island can accommodate and celebrate our differences and diversity. Very few countries get the chance to begin anew. Ireland, North and South, has that



Congressman Richard Neal, President Bill Clinton and Gerry Adams – New York City



chance.

"So, despite the current difficulties the future looks bright. What is needed is the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including a date and planning for the unity referendum.

"The Good Friday Agreement has created a democratic and peaceful path to Irish reunification. It is now a do-able project. And with the continuing support of Irish America, we can make it happen."

‘Let us end futile recriminations’ - towards a new, united future

This time 100 years ago, the Irish civil war was raging; a consequence of continued British colonial interference and the denial of Irish national self-determination and sovereignty.



Declan Kearney MLA

The scale of the violence which occurred, included murder, horrific life changing injuries, gender-based violence, and psychological trauma, with economic and social repercussions.

No effective reconciliation process was ever put in place.

Our most recent devastating phase of conflict has also still to be reconciled and healed.

Ireland’s most recent, and protracted, phase of insurgency against British rule was finally displaced by the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), signed on 10 April 1998. It drew a line under political conflict and established a comprehensive peace settlement.

It also set forth a vision of a rights based, non-sectarian future. Importantly, it made a connection between the past and building a better future.

The forthcoming 25th GFA anniversary will rightly be celebrated as having transformed society in Ireland.

However, fundamental challenges remain, and sections of political unionism and the British establishment have resisted its full implementation.

So, as the GFA anniversary approaches, the focus should be upon opening a new phase of the peace process and a pathway towards a new future.

Sinn Féin believes that healing the divisions in Irish society is inseparable from the transition towards a new, agreed constitutional democracy in Ireland.

The GFA provides a mechanism for self-determination through which Irish unity can be achieved peacefully and politically.

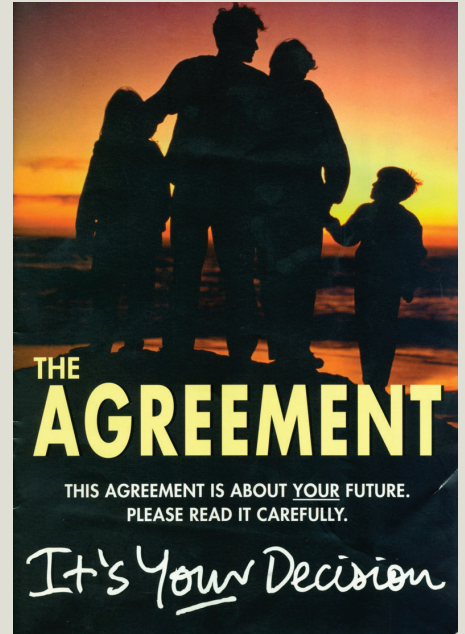
A new Ireland has to be built upon a willingness to forgive. Reconciliation and generosity should be the foundation for managing the constitutional change now fixed on the political horizon.

Sinn Féin continues to advocate for an initiative of common acknowledgement by all sides; supporting the establishment of a ‘National Reconciliation Day’ to remember all victims of the conflict in Ireland, and a perpetual symbol of our collective commitment to ongoing healing.

The immediate challenge is to ensure that proper power sharing, and the North/South political institutions are restored in line with the spirit and vision of the GFA.

Our collective responsibility must be to ensure future generations inherit a reunified and reconciled Ireland.

The key to opening this new phase of our peace process will depend upon



an agreed acceptance of the role which democracy, forgiveness and generosity must play in creating a united and a shared future.



The full article can be read here:
<https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/28494>

European Parliament: Good Friday Agreement 25th Anniversary

Sinn Féin MEP Chris MacManus has praised the European Institutions for putting the protection of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) front and centre for the past 25 years.

All three EU Presidents, Ursula von der Leyen (Commission), Charles Michel (Council) and Roberta Metsola (Parliament) addressed over 500 MEPs at a European Parliament ceremony.

Speaking at the ceremony, MacManus said:

“The Good Friday Agreement is a peace process and a political process. It’s a living, breathing document.

“It is a framework which guarantees that the people of Ireland – north and south – will decide whether to unite or whether the North remains tied to Britain.

“My hope is that, within this decade, the people will be asked to be part of a new Ireland – a modern, forward-looking society based on peace, equality, and social progress within the European Union.



“It is important we celebrate the 25th anniversary. I have no doubt that the EU will continue to play an important role for the next 25 years as the Good Friday Agreement embarks upon its next chapter.

TRIBUTE: TOM ‘DUTCH’ HOLLAND

It is with great sadness to announce the passing of Sinn Féin International Desk Manager, Tom ‘Dutch’ Holland. A former political prisoner and blanketman, Dutch spent his life campaigning for social and political rights at home and abroad. For the last 20 years Dutch had been at the front of Sinn Féin’s international relations, working on solidarity initiatives relating to the Basque Country, Catalonia, Palestine, Cuba, Colombia, Kurdistan, South Africa and further afield.

Expressing deep sadness, Gerry Kelly MLA reflected on Tom’s legacy: “I am deeply saddened at the death of lifelong North Belfast republican Tom ‘Dutch’ Holland after a period of



illness.

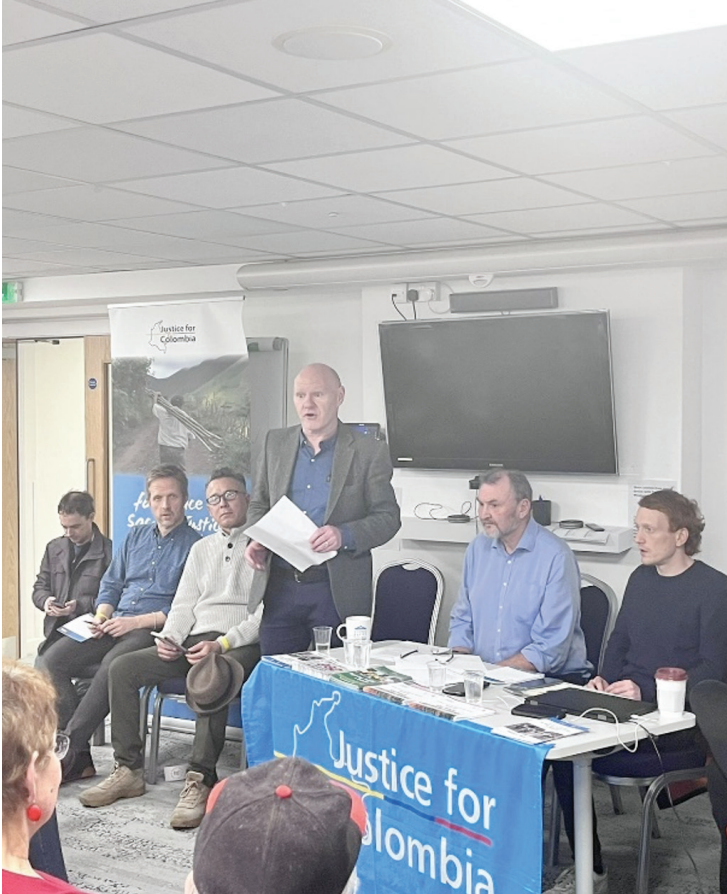
“Tom worked as Sinn Féin’s International Desk Manager articulating and promoting the peace process and the party’s united Ireland message across the globe.

“He worked tirelessly to forge and sustain strong links with political struggles and organisations the world over and gained huge respect from political figures everywhere who valued his efficient work and his friendship.

“Sinn Féin has lost a talented and experienced activist and a dear friend and comrade.”

A committed Irish Republican, Dutch will always be remembered by his comrades, friends, and family.

Go raibh suaimhneas síoraí ar a anam. Slán, Dutch



Maskey reiterates support for Colombian Peace Process

At February's 'Adelante: Latin America Conference' in London, Paul Maskey MP reiterated Sinn Féin's support for the Colombian Peace Process.

The West Belfast MP said: "The election of Lula da Silva in Brazil and Gustavo Petro in Colombia is a measure of the exciting progress sweeping much of Latin America. "As someone who travelled to Cuba in 2015 for the Havana Peace Talks, I am always keen to hear updates on the Colombian Peace Process. "I welcome President Petro's

pursuit of 'Total Peace' and hope his administration continues to press ahead with fully implementing the 2016 agreement.

"It is deplorable to hear of the ongoing killings of political activists, former combatants, and trade unionists by right-wing elements who seek to drag the process backwards. "There is no doubt this new government faces many challenges, but our message to them is to never lose hope. "As Martin McGuinness once said: 'You must choose hope over fear'."

Referendum the correct place for debate on Irish neutrality

- John Brady TD

Sinn Féin TD John Brady, has welcomed public discussion around Irish neutrality but said it should only take place in the context of a referendum.

The Wicklow TD was responding to the announcement by Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar that public discussions on the future of Irish neutrality are to be unveiled later this year by Tánaiste, Micheál Martin.

John Brady said:

"I welcome the opportunity discuss the issue of Irish neutrality.

"But, I would like to know why the Tánaiste has abandoned his preference for a citizens' assembly?

"The majority of Irish people have consistently expressed strong support in opinion polls in favour of neutrality, including 66% of Fianna Fáil voters, and 61% of Fine Gael supporters.

"The government has attempted to influence public opinion by hijacking the emotional response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine to abandon Ireland's neutral, non-aligned status.

"The Taoiseach's comments come against a backdrop of a meeting of EU leaders, where his aides were forced to clarify his remarks that Vladimir Putin will only be stopped 'when we stop him'.

"In an increasingly polarised world, Ireland needs to develop and maintain a strategy of active neutrality to become an active advocate for peace, nuclear non-proliferation, and the rights of small nations.

"If the government is serious about listening to the voice of the Irish people, it will hold a referendum on enshrining neutrality within the constitution."



John
Brady TD

Politically motivated HDP trial – Freedom for Öcalan

Sinn Féin TD John Brady and MEP Chris MacManus have expressed serious concerns about Turkish democratic values amidst the controversial trial to proscribe the ‘People’s Democratic Party’ (HDP).

In a joint statement, they spoke out against politically motivated attempts to ban the HDP:

“The ongoing politically motivated trials of the HDP by Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, must halt immediately.

“There is no doubt there is a concerted campaign in Turkey to deny the HDP access to the democratic process.

“HDP representatives were deliberately excluded from a recent visit by a Turkish

parliamentary delegation to Leinster House,; Sinn Féin vociferously protested this with the delegation.

“Dissolving the HDP is a decision to limit democracy.”

In February before Turkey’s tragic earthquake disaster, Chris Hazzard MP travelled to Istanbul as part of a human rights delegation observing Turkey’s political situation and experiences of Kurdish people.

The South Down MP reflected:

“I heard at first-hand the extent of how Turkey’s security apparatus and penal system is being weaponised against political opponents.

“Lawyers and human rights defenders are subjected to unwarranted investigation, prosecution, and detention.

“But, the illegal detention of Abdullah Öcalan is at the centre of these issues.

“There can be no doubt,

Öcalan’s freedom is inevitable for a peaceful and political solution of the Kurdish issue and the democratisation of Turkey.”



HALKLARIN DEMOKRATİK PARTİSİ



MOLLOY DENOUNCES PHONE HACKING OF BAHRAIN PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

In February Francie Molloy MP addressed a London meeting condemning the government of Bahrain for phone hacking pro-democracy activists and political exiles.

The Mid-Ulster MP said: “I extended Sinn Féin’s solidarity to Bahraini pro-democracy activists.

“Many attending the event were political exiles who face imprisonment, torture, or worse if they

return home.

“It was noteworthy that just that morning the British High Court indicted the Bahrain government

for hacking the computers of Bahraini activists living in Britain.

“The brutality and repression of Bahrain’s

security services should be condemned by all who uphold democracy.

“However, it is not surprising to hear the British government has continued to fund and support such a regime.

“As a party, we believe in democracy, we believe in rights and the power of ordinary people.

“That is why Sinn Féin supports the calls for democracy and peace in Bahrain.”





Martina Anderson, Mairéad Farrell, Danish Ambassador Lars Thuesen, and Danish Foreign Affairs Committee Members

SINN FÉIN REPRESENTATIVE TO EUROPE: Danish & German MP Delegations

Across Europe interest is increasing about an Irish unity referendum. Politicians and diplomats are asking about a constitutional referendum and the avenue to building a new Ireland.

Several European parliamentarians have travelled to Ireland on fact-finding missions. Foreign Affairs parliamentarians from different political parties in Germany and Denmark recently met with members of the Good Friday Agreement committee, TDs, and MLAs. The topic of conversation was around how the post-Brexit environment has opened a space for erosion of human rights, workers' rights, market de-regulation and moving away European norms and standards.



Martina Anderson

European parliamentarians are concerned about maintaining regulatory alignment across the island of Ireland and implications for the European Union (EU) single market.

They know the constitutional conversation is well underway and European parliamentarians have seen for themselves that the political landscape in Ireland has changed. The north of Ireland back within the EU returns fundamental rights and funding removed because of Brexit. It is finally time for the Irish government to establish a Citizens' Assembly on Irish unity; and similarly, the EU should prepare for constitutional change.

Health workers deserve fair pay and conditions - Dillon tells London demo

Sinn Féin MLA Linda Dillon has said the British Government should get on with delivering fair pay for health and social care workers.

Speaking on the 11th March at the 'SOS NHS' demonstration in London, the Party Health spokesperson said:

"Our health service is in crisis on the back of 12 years of savage Tory cuts which have underfunded and undermined our public services.

"Money has been stripped out of vital public services, while big energy companies who have ripped people off with scandalous prices are rewarded with billions in profits. That's not a fair deal.

"Health and social care workers should not have been forced onto the streets in the freezing cold for fair pay and safe working conditions.

"Without fair pay and safe working conditions, it becomes much tougher to retain skilled health workers and that needs to be addressed through increased investment.

"Rishi Sunak's Tory government needs to end the attacks on our health service and bring forward a deal that meets the needs of workers now."



Linda Dillon MLA



European Committee finds state still violating workers' rights – Louise O'Reilly

Sinn Féin TD Louise O'Reilly has called on the government to bring forward a roadmap to address nonconformity with the European Social Charter.

The call comes on the back of a report by the European Committee of Social Rights, which found breaches of the charter in workers' rights.

Louise O'Reilly said:

"This is not the first time the European Committee of Social Rights has found an Irish government in breach of the workers' rights.

"For many years the Committee criticised successive governments' failures to allow members of An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces to fully participate in pay and service negotiations.

"This report reaffirms those criticisms and finds breaches of the European Social Charter in terms of sub-minimum rates of pay for workers aged 18 and 19.

"Further breaches included a failure to protect against dismissal on grounds of trade union affiliation and the right to equal pay without discrimination on grounds of sex.

"The Minister for Enterprise, Trade, and Employment should bring forward a roadmap to address nonconformity with the charter over the next 12 months.

"It is unfair for workers the State continues to be in breach of the European Social Charter, it is embarrassing that successive Irish governments have shown no effort at rectifying consistent breaches."

JOHN BRADY TD OFFERS CONDOLENCES FOLLOWING DEATHS OF GOAL STAFF IN EARTHQUAKE TRAGEDY

Sinn Féin TD John Brady offered his condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of the 26 Goal members who tragically died during the tragic February earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.



John Brady TD

The Wicklow TD said:

"I offer my sincere condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of the 26 GOAL workers killed during the horrific earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

"Those who died were engaged in vital humanitarian work, often in very tough conditions, their commitment, compassion, and courage leaves behind a testament to the very best of the human spirit.

"Despite the tragic personal impact for the loss of their colleagues, GOAL teams remained on the ground continuing to offer humanitarian aid.

"Many other Irish NGOs have also had teams on the ground in the region doing what they can for the victims of this tragedy.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with them and the survivors of the tragedy."



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