

CF to note



DSG
a NIO.

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 September 1981

Dear Miss McCloskey,

Thank you for your letter of 20 August about your brother.

I do entirely understand how worried you and the rest of the family must be about him. I want you to know that despite what is said and written by some people about my attitude to the hunger strike, I very much regret that young men have been prepared to throw away their lives for an objective which - as I have said on many occasions - no responsible Government anywhere could grant, since it could only aid and abet those who advocate and use violence to attain political ends.

I note that you say that you, your family, relatives and friends are all anxious that your brother should not sacrifice his life as ten other prisoners have now done. I can only urge you all to impress on him that the five demands of the prisoners amount to a prison regime which no Government could concede, for the reason I have given. It may be that if this is put to him by people he knows and trusts, he will decide to stop his fast and so save his life.

I hope you will see that it is this course which would be courageous and right - not for your brother to continue, and so produce another pointless death with all the consequent anguish to family and friends as well as further tension in the community and the risk of more deaths and injuries to people not directly involved.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Miss Sharon McCloskey.

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Ireland HC.

cc NIO.

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

15 September 1981

Dear Mrs. McCloskey,

Thank you for your letter of 1 September.

I have indeed received it personally and read it, I hope, with true understanding. I do care very deeply about those to whom the hunger strike has brought pain and bereavement, as I do for all those in Northern Ireland who have suffered from violence in whatever form that has taken.

You ask if you can come and see me. I hope you will understand that I really do not mean to disappoint you and Mrs. Lynch, but I am afraid I do not see how such a meeting could help. I believe myself that the Government's position has already been set out very clearly. But my officials are, nevertheless, ready to explain it again carefully to anyone to whom that would be of value. That of course extends, before anyone else, to the families of the hunger strikers. If that would be of any help to you, then it can be done with all speed. But the fact is that the hunger strikers have no more to gain for themselves by carrying on. I think many people now do understand this. It is my hope that those whom the hunger strikers trust will say so to them and that my writing to you will help you to do so.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Mrs. P. McCloskey