

The Martin McGuinness Principles

"I believe we stand on the threshold of great change. Previous generations have struggled for a United Ireland. But our generation has the best opportunity to achieve it."

- Martin McGuinness

(1) EQUALITY

THE ENACTMENT OF A BILL OF RIGHTS:

"We have pressed consistently for the establishment of a Bill of Rights in the North and an all-Ireland Charter of Rights" - Martin McGuinness

The terms of the Good Friday Agreement called for the adoption of a Bill of Rights in the North of Ireland. Twenty years after the Good Friday Agreement was ratified by more than 70% of the voters in the North of Ireland and 94% of the people in the Republic there is still no Bill of Rights. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was mandated to put forward recommendations. In 2008, the Commission made proposals to the UK government recommending the recognition of a broad range of social and economic rights. Successive British governments have failed to affirmatively act on these recommendations. Now, with significant opposition from within the British government to continuing to accept the jurisdiction of European human rights conventions, and a determination to scrap the Human rights Act, it becomes even more important that the rights of Ireland's citizens in the North be protected when it comes to critical human rights issues.

(2) RESPECT

FULL STATUTORY EQUALITY FOR THE IRISH LANGUAGE:

"Successive British Governments... have totally failed to meet their obligations... to protect the rights of the Irish language community"

- Martin McGuinness

The Good Friday Agreement affirmed "the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland... the British Government will, in particular in relation to the Irish language, where appropriate and where people so desire it: take resolute action to promote the language; facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand ..."

Eight years later, under the terms of the St. Andrews Agreement of 2006, the British Government committed to introduce an Act to give the Irish language official status equal to that accorded the Scots Gaelic and Welsh languages. They failed to honor this obligation, and the Democratic Unionist Party explicitly repudiated it. Subsequent DUP moves in government to defund Irish language study were a major contributing factor to the resignation of Martin McGuinness as Northern Ireland's Deputy First Minister in 2017, when he cited that party's lack of "respect" for the rights and cultural traditions of the Irish nationalist community in the North.

(3) TRUTH

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF THE CONFLICT AND THEIR FAMILIES:

"Dealing with the legacy of the past remains one of the key outstanding challenges of our peace process. Unless it is dealt with in a comprehensive manner then the essential process of healing and reconciliation cannot gain momentum"

"Instead of working constructively to address the hurt and pain caused by the legacy of our recent conflict, the British Government has, at every turn, blocked and frustrated all efforts to reach a solution" - Martin McGuinness

Many victims of the conflict in the North and their families have waited decades to learn the full truth about what happened to them and their loved ones. Funding must be provided for proper inquests to move forward. The full story of collusion and cover-ups must be told, and those responsible for human rights abuses must be brought to justice.

(4) SELF-DETERMINATION

THERE MUST BE A REFERENDUM ON IRISH UNITY TO AFFIRM IRISH SELF-DETERMINATION:

"There is a democratic imperative to provide Irish citizens with the right to vote in a border poll on Irish unity to end partition and retain a role in the EU."

"A border poll on Irish unity is part of the process of building a modern and dynamic New Republic on this island – an agreed Ireland achieved by peaceful and democratic means." - Martin McGuinness

Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, the British Government committed to formally "recognize that it is for the people of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent. . ." Provisions were included for referenda on Irish unity, whose results would be given effect by the governmental parties to the Agreement. The Agreement went on to commit that the signatory parties (including the British Government) should not "make any change in the status of Northern Ireland save with the consent of a majority of its people" (italics added).

Despite the fact that Brexit clearly represents a "change in status" of Northern Ireland, and despite the fact that the people of the north voted by a large majority to reject Brexit and remain inside the European Union, the British government is determined to impose this very significant change (having potentially profound consequences for Ireland), on the people of Ireland north and south, against their democratically expressed wishes.

If the Good Friday Agreement's commitments to self-determination are to have any meaning, the British Government must allow the Irish people the opportunity to determine their future.

We support:

- A Bill of Rights.
- Full statutory equality for the Irish Language.
- Funding for legacy inquests as part of the process of healing and reconciliation.
- A referendum on Irish unity in keeping with the Good Friday Agreement.