

A statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Press release

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Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

All communities in Northern Ireland must work together to resolve the tensions that we are currently facing. The people of Northern Ireland deserve better than a continuation of the violence and disorder that we have witnessed in recent days. I know, from my ongoing contact with party leaders, that this is a view that is shared by all. The only way to resolve differences is through dialogue and in that regard we must all lead by example.

Those engaged in this destruction and disorder do not represent Northern Ireland.

I have seen first hand the true spirit of Northern Ireland – the creativity, the optimism and the determination to never return to the conflict and division of the past. We cannot allow that spirit to be crushed by a small minority intent on violence.

The strength of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement lay in providing a framework for all communities in Northern Ireland, through mutual respect and tolerance, to live and work together.

I am aware of the ongoing concerns from some in the unionist and loyalist community over recent months and I have been engaging and listening to those concerns. However, I remain clear that the right way to express concerns or frustrations is through dialogue, engagement, and the democratic process, not through violence or disorder.

Today, I will be meeting with community, faith and political leaders. Following engagement earlier today, I welcome the statement from the Executive and join them in appealing for calm. I will do all I can to continue to facilitate further constructive discussions on the way forward over the coming days. I remain in close contact with the Prime Minister to keep him updated.

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