

Irish Northern Aid Committee
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New York (April 5) - Rosaleen Doherty, director of the Irish Northern Aid Committee POW Department, has expressed grave concern for the safety of Irish Republican political prisoners who were severely beaten by riotous prison guards after an escape tunnel was discovered at one of the H-Block wings in Lisburn, Northern Ireland.

Reacting to a report in this week's issue of *The Irish People*, Doherty condemned the indiscriminate beating of political prisoners, some of whom were handcuffed and stripped naked before being attacked by guards. More than 40 POWs were beaten in the attack.

"Reports coming from family members and others in Ireland indicate that these prisoners were treated worse than cattle. Guards ran riot in the cell blocks. No prisoner was safe and some were singled out for attack by sadistic warders who acted more like crazed thugs than prison guards. If this happened in the U.S., a federal investigation into these actions would certainly be called for," Doherty said.

Doherty said that POWs in H-7, where the 100-foot tunnel was discovered last week, were now under 24-hour lock-down. She also said 17 POWs in another block were handcuffed, stripped naked and beaten by guards. Many were sent to the "boards," prison parlance for punishment cells. All prison privileges, including exercise and use of computers, have been canceled. All personal possessions, including handicrafts made by prisoners and clothing, have been removed from cells.

"Jimmy Smyth and Joe Doherty, who are kept in H-4, were also savagely beaten. Although their block was not involved in the tunnel, they were singled out for special treatment. This action is particularly disturbing, since both men were extradited from the U.S. on a specific guarantee from the British government to the American government that they would not be treated badly when they were returned to the Kesh," she said.

"This action is alarming considering there are three other men - Pol Brennan, Kevin Barry Artt and Terry Kirby - facing a similar fate if they are returned to the Kesh. These men all face extradition back to the north and potentially the same brutal treatment as Jimmy and Joe. I urge the U.S. government to reconsider the cases against these men and let them remain in the U.S.," Doherty said.

Brennan, Artt and Kirby all face extradition proceedings in California. All three escaped from Long Kesh in 1983, when 38 Irish POWs broke out of the prison, considered Europe's most secure facility, in the largest escape in British prison history.

The New York-based Irish Northern Aid Committee, founded in 1971, is a non-profit, humanitarian organization which raises funds for the families of Irish political prisoners in British, Irish and American jails.

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