

An Taoiseach  
Leo Varadkar TD  
Oifig an Taoisigh,  
Tithe an Rialtais,  
Baile Atha Cliath 2

## **A Thoisigh**

We, the undersigned, are concerned Irish Citizens who note with grave apprehension the continued denial of rights afforded to our fellow citizens in the North of Ireland, rights that are enjoyed in this State and throughout Britain

We note further the civic initiative before Christmas whereby many northern nationalists, from across the civic spectrum, corresponded with you to record their dissatisfaction and disquiet over the equality vacuum that persists in the North.

Frankly, as fellow Irish citizens, we are shocked at the level of permanent inequality in respect of access to basic rights that people in the North are expected to endure. In summary, these are:

- Marriage Equality
- Language Equality
- Access to Justice before a court of law.

The majority of parties and MLA's support marriage equality yet this has been blocked by a minority led by the DUP. Instead of facing down this denial of rights the new British Secretary of State Karen Bradley has stated that it was not for her to impose marriage equality.

We, as a people, are proud of our leading role in legislating for Marriage Equality, and are rightly championed around the world, most recently in Australia, as bold and determined advocates for tolerance and equality.

How can we, as citizens, in Donegal or Louth, sit idly by, when rights enjoyed by us are denied to our neighbours, families and friends, in Derry or Armagh?

Is é an Ghaeilge an teanga oifigiúil den Stát seo. The Irish language is a central aspect of our heritage and culture. It is safeguarded constitutionally in Bunreacht na hÉireann as the first official language of this State and is enshrined in law by the Official Languages Act 2003.

Parity of esteem is a central commitment within the Good Friday Agreement. The Irish and British Government signed up to an Irish Language Act as part of the St. Andrews Agreement, which led to the re-establishment of the political institutions created by the Good Friday Agreement. And yet, there has been nothing but refusal and obstruction when it comes to honouring this pledge.

Our language sits as a national treasure, with our indigenous Gaelic sports, traditional dance and music. it is an intrinsic part of our identity and yet our fellow citizens in the North must endure contemptuous insults and the continued undermining of limited measures to promote Irish.

This lack of respect and denial of parity of esteem for the Irish Identity and refusal to honour the agreements to legislate to safeguard the Irish language by a minority is unacceptable and an insult to all those who voted for the Good Friday Agreement.

A basic tenet of the legal system is access to, and equality before the law. Yet families of those affected by the conflict in the north, cannot gain access to justice in court. The most senior law officer in the jurisdiction, who is charged with ensuring compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights, has made a request for funds, for court resources, and this has been denied to him as a matter of political policy.

Healing the hurt of the past requires a new approach. A new approach and the much needed legal architecture, was agreed as part of the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements. These have not been implemented, because the British Government have attempted to negotiate for themselves a secrecy veto in the interests of National Security and more recently, an effective amnesty for their forces involved in actions such as the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and others.

We are also concerned about the pernicious and pervasive effect of Brexit.

The majority of people in the north voted against Brexit. They did so because it is in their best interests politically and economically. That democratic mandate has been ignored.

The imposition of an EU Frontier across Ireland belies the approach of the British government to Ireland, our economy, our rights and our agreements.

The North of Ireland being forced to leave the EU, against the expressed wishes of its people, will represent a major set-back for the overall political process and directly challenge the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement. As a co-guarantor of that agreement, the Irish Government must realise the devastating consequences for the human rights protections contained within it.

We urge you and your Government to ensure that equality, human rights and the respect afforded to Irish citizens in the South are enshrined as inalienable rights in the North.

Our Proclamation of Independence asserts that the Irish Republic is entitled to and claims the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. It states further that our Republic "guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens."

We submit that these express intentions were never more relevant to all the citizens of the whole nation than now. We appeal to you urgently to ensure that the noble guarantees of our Proclamation and Constitution are enacted, that our agreements are implemented and the rights of all protected.

**Is sinne le mór mheas**

An Taoiseach  
Leo Varadkar TD  
Oifig an Taoisigh,  
Tithe an Rialtais,  
Baile Atha Cliath 2

## A Thaoisigh

Is saoránaigh Éireannacha muid a chuir ár lámh leis an litir seo thíos agus tugaimid faoi deara le himní a bhfuil ar siúl maidir le diúltú cearta dár gcosmhuintir i dtuaisceart na hÉireann. Is cearta iad seo atá ar fáil sa Stát seo agus ar fud na Breataine.

Tugaimid faoi deara fosta go ndeachaigh grúpa náisiúnaithe ó achan cearn den phobal ó thuaidh i mbun comhfhreagrais leat roimh an Nollaig lena n-imní agus a míshástacht a chur in iúl maidir leis an easpa comhionannais a mhaireann ó thuaidh.

Leis an fhírinne a rá, mar shaoránaigh Éireannacha, cuireann sé iontas orainn an méid éagothroime atá ann i ndáil le rochtain ar chearta bunúsacha, a bhfuiltear ag súil leis go nglacfaidh pobal an tuaiscirt leis.

Go gonta, seo mar a leanas na cearta,

- Comhionannas pósta
- Comhionannas teanga
- Rochtain ar Cheartas sna Cúirteanna

Tá mórán de na páirtithe is na Baill den Tionóil Reachtúil ag tacú le comhionannas pósta ach cuireadh bac air, arís is arís eile ag mionlach beag leis an DUP i gceannas orthu. Seachas aghaidh a thabhairt ar an diúltú cearta seo ta ráite ag an Rúnaí Stáit nua na Breataine, Karen Bradley nach dualgas dá cuid comhionannas pósta a chur i bhfeidhm.

Tá sinne, mar phobal, an-bhródúil as an ról lárnach a bhí againn i reachtaíocht a thabhairt isteach do chomhionannas pósta. Is ceart go ndéantar sinn a mhóradh ar fud an domhain mar urlabhraithe cróga is tiomanta ar son an chomhionannais agus na caoinfhulaingthe. Chonacthas seo le gairid san Astráil.

Cén dóigh ar féidir linn mar shaoránaigh i nDún nan Gall nó i gCo. Lú fanacht inár dtost fhad is atá cearta bunúsacha faoi mar atá againn féin, diúltaithe dár gcolcheathracha, dár gcomharsana agus dár gcairde i nDoire nó in Ard Mhacha.

Is gné lárnach dár ndúchas agus dár gcultúr í an Ghaeilge. Tá meas uirthi agus tá sí faoi chosaint mar chéad theanga an Stáit seo i mBunreacht na hÉireann agus tugtar cosaint reachtúil di le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

Is tiomantas lárnach i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta cothrom na Féinne. D'aontaigh Rialtas na Breataine agus Rialtas na hÉireann Acht Gaeilge a thabhairt isteach i gComhaontú Chill Rímhinn. Leis an gcomhaontú seo a bunaíodh Institiúidí Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta in athuir ach táthar ag diúltú an comhaontú seo a chomhlíonadh.

Is seoid náisiúnta ár dteanga mar aon lenár gcluichí dúchasacha Gaelacha, ceol agus damhsa traidisiúnta. Cuid thábhachtach dár bhféiniúlacht mar shaoránaigh í ach caithfidh ár gcosmhuintir ó thuaidh maslacha gránna a fhulaingt a thagann ó mhionlach agus iarrachtaí chun na cosaintí laga atá ann cheana féin a laghdú níos mó.

Níl an easpa measa, ná an diúltú do chothrom na Féinne agus do chomhaontaithe atá ann chun reachtaíocht a thabhairt isteach chun an Ghaeilge a chosaint, níl siad sin maith go leor. Is masla é dóibh siúd a vótáil ar son Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.

Cuid lárnach in aon chóras dlí is ea rochtain ar an dlí agus cothromas sa dhlí. Ach níl an rochtain sin ar cheartas sna cúirteanna ag na clanna sin a d'fhulaing le linn na coinbhleachta. Rinne an t-oifigeach dlí is sinsearaí sa dhlínse, ar cúis leis a chinntiú go bhfuiltear ag comhlíonadh Choinbhinsiún na hEorpa maidir le Cearta an Duine, rinne sé iarratas ar mhaoiniú breise, acmhainní cúirte, agus an méid seo uilig diúltaithe dó mar chuid de bheartas polaitiúil.

Tá bealach nua de dhíth leis an bhfulaingt a bhaineann leis an am atá caite a leigheas. An bealach nua seo mar aon leis an gcreatlach dlíthiúil a aontaíodh mar chuid de Chomhaontú Theach Chnoc an Anfa is Comhaontú an Túis Úir. Níor cuireadh i bhfeidhm iad mar tá Rialtas na Breataine ag iarraidh cros a bhaineann le Rúndacht Náisiúnta a fháil dóibh féin agus le gairid ag iarraidh pardún dá chuid fórsaí a raibh lámh acu i ngníomhartha cosúil le buamáil Bhaile Átha Cliath agus Muineacháin.

Vótáil tromlach na ndaoine sa tuaisceart i gcoinne Brexit. Rinne siad amhlaidh mar is chun a leasa polaitiúil agus eacnamaíoch é. Tugtar cluas bodhar don éileamh sin.

Léirítear cur chuige Rialtas na Breataine i leith na hÉireann, ár ngeilleagar, ár gcearta ár gcomhaontuithe le forchur Brexit mar aon le teorainn AE ar fud Éireann.

Buille tubaisteach don phróiseas polaitiúil sa tuaisceart a bheas ann má chuirtear ar an tuaisceart AE a fhágáil in éadan thoill soiléir na ndaoine. Tabharfar dúshlán do chaighdeán Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, ar comhráthóir dá chuid Rialtas na hÉireann, agus beidh tionchar mór ag an méid seo uilig ar na cosaintí atá ann.

Mar sin, impímid ar an Rialtas a chinntiú go gcumhdófar an comhionannas, na cearta agus an meas a chuirtear ar fáil do shaoránaigh sa deisceart, mar cheart doshannta sa tuaisceart.

Deimhnítear inár bhForógra Neamhspleáchais go ndlíonn Poblacht na hÉireann, agus éilíonn sí, géillsine ó mhuintir uile na hÉireann, idir fhir agus mhná. Maítear ann fosta: go ráthaíonn an phoblacht saoirse creidimh agus saoirse shibhialta, comhchearta agus comhdheiseanna, dá saoránaigh uile.”

Áitimid le meas go bhfuil na cuspóirí soiléire seo níos ábhartha anois ná riamh do shaoránaigh uile an náisiúin agus déanaimid achainí ort go práinneach go gcuirfead i bhfeidhm na dearbhuithe uaisle atá san Fhorógra agus sa Bhunreacht againn, go gcomhlíonfar na comhaontuithe agus go ndéanfar cearta an uile duine a chosaint.

**Is sinne le mór mheas**

Anne Lynskey	Community
Aoife McAnespie	Sports
Betty Purcell	Media
Billy Wall	Labour movement
Breandán De Gallaí	Arts
Brendan Murray	Arts
Brian Forbes	Community
Brian MacSuibhne	Community
Brian Ó Ghallachóir	Arts
Bríd Ní Sheighin	Community
Caroline Grace-Cassidy	Arts
Christy Moore	Musician
Ciara McAnespie	Sports
Ciarán MacGonigal	Arts
Collette Ruadh	Community
Colm Farrell	Community
Colm McGeehan	Law
Con Casey	Community
Conor Ferguson	Sports
Conor Ruadh	Community
Daltún Ó Ceallaigh	Community
Damien Dempsey	Musician
Dave Guiney	Sports
Dean Scurry	Arts
Dermot O'Leary	Community
Des Ferguson	Sports
Dominic Mac Giolla Bhríde	An Ghaeilge
Don Baker	Arts
Donal Fallon	Academia
Donal O'Kelly	Arts
Donie O'Sullivan	Sports
Dr Neil Comer	Academia
Eamonn MacAoidh	Sports
Eddie Barrett	Community
Eimear McAnespie	Sports
Frances Black	Musician
Frank Connolly	Labour movement
Frank Twomey	Arts
Frankie Gaffney	Arts
Gary Daly	Law

Ger Lynch	Sports
Gerald Roarty	Community
Gerard Humphries	Law
Gerry McCormack	Labour movement
Gerry Quinn	Community
Glen Hansard	Musician
Glenn Fitzpatrick	Labour movement
Glenna Lynch	Community
Grace Dyas	Arts
Greg Ennis	Labour movement
James Connolly Heron	Arts
Jim Fitzpatrick	Arts
Jim Sheridan	Arts
Jo Spain	Author
John Connors	Arts
Karen Casey	Arts
Leanne Fleming	Community
Liam Ó Dubháin	Arts
Liam Scollan	Community
Lorcan Collins	Arts
Louise Nic Dhaibhid	Arts
Máiread Ní Mhaonaigh	Musician
Mark Fitzpatrick	Community
Martin Hayes	Arts
Mary Horgan	Community
Michael Farrell	Law
Michael Finucane	Law
Michael Scott	Arts
Mícheál Ó Doibhlin	Arts
Michelle Forde	Community
Myles Gaffney	Arts
Niall Vallely	Arts
Paddy Cullivan	Media
Paddy Prendiville	Media
Pat Guilfoyle	Community
Patrick Daly	Law
Patrick O'Sullivan	Community
Paul Allen	Media
Paul Clifford	Community
Peadar Ó Riada	Musician

Peter Coonan	Arts
Peter Fitzpatrick	Community
Peter Sheridan	Arts
PJ Gallagher	Arts
Póilín Uí Ghallachóir	Arts
Proinsias Ó Maolchalain	Law
Richard Corrigan	Business
Risteard Ó Fuarain	An Ghaeilge
Robert Ballagh	Arts
Rossa Ó Snodaigh	Arts
Ruadhan Mac Aodhán	Law
Ruairi Creaney	Labour movement
Ruan O'Donnell	Academia
Ryan McAnespie	Sports

Séamas Ó Tuathail	Law
Seán Ó Coisdealbha	An Ghaeilge
Sean Walsh	Arts
Shane Cullen	Arts
Sinead Murray-Lynch	Community
Stevie Fitzpatrick	Labour movement
Terry Ferguson	Sports
Terry McMahon	Arts
Tim Pat Coogan	Author
Tom Clonan	Business
Tom Murray	Community
Tommy Guilfoyle	Community
Tommy Smith	Community