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## Adams condemns detective's killing as first IRA man freed

(Valerie Robinson, [Irish News](#))

Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams yesterday (Tuesday) "unreservedly condemned" the shooting of Garda Jerry McCabe, hours after one of his IRA killers was freed from prison.

Michael (Mick) O'Neill, from Patrickswell in Limerick, was released from Castlerea Prison in Co Roscommon after serving eight years of an 11-year sentence.

He was given standard remission for good behaviour.

There had been speculation that O'Neill would be freed tomorrow – just a week before the Republic's general election – but it is believed he was allowed out two days early to avoid a media scrum outside the prison.

He left at around 7am yesterday, getting into a waiting car without making any comment to a handful of reporters.

Detective Garda McCabe, a father-of-five, was gunned down by an IRA gang during a botched post office raid in Adare in Co Limerick on June 7 1996.

Three other killers remain behind bars.

Jeremiah Sheehy will be eligible for release next February, while Kevin Walsh and Pearse McAuley are due to be freed in August 2009.

Speaking in Dublin yesterday, Mr Adams said he "unreservedly condemned" the killing of Mr McCabe and also that of 'Disappeared' Belfast mother-of-10 Jean McConville in 1972.

"I have also furthermore apologised and expressed my deepest regret not just for those two victims' families but for all the victims who have been killed in the last 30 or 40 years," he said.

During a question and answer session on RTE Radio, the Sinn Féin leader said he had profound regrets for the loss of

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life during the Troubles but said that growing up in Belfast he had been treated "in a very, very second-class way, as were my parents and grandparents before that" and that he had been jailed in a prison ship and in Long Kesh as a member of the civil rights movement.

He accused the Irish government in the past of having "abandoned" nationalists in Northern Ireland, while Sinn Féin members had been "treated like pariahs".

The McCabe family had said they would deal with yesterday's prisoner release without comment but widow Ann McCabe responded to Mr Adams's comments by claiming he had previously refused to condemn her husband's killing.

"I want to remind Mr Adams that this is the first time he has ever used the word 'condemn' in relation to my husband's murder. I asked him in New York [in March 2006] to condemn it and he said it was 'wrong'," she said.

Mr Adams insisted that the public record would show that he had been "unqualified in terms of this dreadful incident".

Meanwhile, there have been unconfirmed reports that a reception for O'Neill was moved from Limerick to Belfast to avoid damaging the election campaign of local Sinn Féin candidate Maurice Quinlivan – brother of Brixton jail escaper Nessian Quinlivan, a close friend of Pearse McAuley.

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