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### **Unlawful acts of Northern Ireland Secretary**

For the second time, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has misused his powers under the Northern Ireland Act 2000 by suspending the Assembly one day and restoring it the next day. The Act gives him no power to do any such thing.

The Act says that as soon as is reasonably practicable after he has suspended the Assembly the Secretary of State must initiate a review under the Belfast Agreement, which necessarily takes at least six weeks to accomplish.

The Act further says that before restoring the Assembly the Secretary of State must take into account the result of the review. Obviously this means he has no power to restore the Assembly until at least six weeks have passed. He certainly has no power to restore it overnight.

What this means is that any person sufficiently interested could ask the High Court to quash the recent restoration order. Whatever else that did, it would at least strike a blow for the rule of law.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 28 September 2001. See further [4.3.3](#).