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PRESIDENT THIEU'S STATEMENT ON FREE ELECTIONS
IN VIETNAM

Comment by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

The statement which President Nguyen Van Thieu has made today is a most important one. It demonstrates strikingly his willingness to do his part in clearing the way for a political solution that will end the fighting and at the same time let the people of South Vietnam determine their own future.

President Thieu has indicated that in free elections, the N. L. F. would be allowed to contest the polls if they renounce violence and pledge themselves to accept the result of the election. The N. L. F. could be represented in the arrangements for the conduct of the elections. An international body would supervise the elections and make sure that they were held under conditions fair to all. President Thieu's government is prepared to discuss with the other side the timetable and the modalities under which the election will be held. The President has also pledged that there would be no reprisals or discrimination after the elections. His government has declared that it will abide by the results of the election whatever those results might be.

This is a very significant statement removing obstacles which certain people in other countries have seen in the way of a peaceful outcome.

President Thieu's political initiative today, and President Nixon's speech on 15 May, demonstrate the sincerity of the Republic of Vietnam and its allies in seeking for a just and lasting peace in accordance with the wishes and interests of the Vietnamese people. It is up to the other side to respond.

CANBERRA
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