

**Reported Incidents
Relating to Racism**

May to October 2004

**National Consultative Committee on
Racism and Interculturalism**

NCCRI Report of Incidents Related to Racism May to October 2004

Introduction

In May 2001 the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) established a system for recording incidents related to racism in Ireland.¹ Incidents are analysed and compiled into six monthly reports.² There have been six reports to date. This is the seventh report, which covers the period May to October 2004. The reports aim to:

- Provide an overview of racist incidents reported to the NCCRI in the given six month period
- Draw out the key issues arising from the incidents logged
- Make recommendations to a range of relevant actors.

The incidents included in this report have been forwarded by non-governmental organisations on behalf of the victims, including key organisations working with Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and migrants. Other incidents have been reported directly to the NCCRI by the victims.

The data that is generated by this reporting system is primarily qualitative and indicative of key issues that need to be addressed. This report does not aim to provide a comprehensive list of every racist incident in Ireland. Indeed evidence from other countries tend to reveal that with all such reporting systems, whether statutory or voluntary, there is likely to be significant under-reporting of incidents. However the NCCRI reporting mechanism plays an important role in complementing other systems such as the Equality Authority casework and Garda records.³

Organisations and individuals reporting racist incidents have also been encouraged to report the incident to the relevant authority responsible for investigating and addressing the complaint, for example, the Gardai (racist crime), the Equality Authority/Equality Tribunal (discrimination in the workplace, discrimination in the provision of goods and services etc.) and local authorities (graffiti, harassment on local authority housing estates etc.). In addition the NCCRI also encourages individuals and organisations to report articles or broadcasts in the national, regional or local media which they consider to be offensive to minority ethnic groups. In a small number of instances, those involved in or reporting the incident only want the incident to be logged by the NCCRI with no further action taken. These requests have been respected.

The NCCRI focus on a policy response to the racist incidents identified. We do not purport to respond to every racist incident reported to our office but to highlight issues such as gaps in service provision and we seek to encourage a national and localised response to incidents.

¹ Reporting forms can be accessed through the NCCRI website www.nccri.com.

² The six monthly reports are also available on our website www.nccri.com/publications.html

³ For official statistics regarding racially motivated crime, see Garda Annual Report 2003 at www.garda.ie

Analysis of Data

- There were 70 racist incidents⁴ reported to the NCCRI between May to October 2004.
- 63% of incidents are reported as occurring in the greater Dublin area
- 22% of incidents are reported as occurring in urban areas outside of Dublin
- 15% of incidents are reported as occurring in predominantly rural areas
- Out of 60 incidents recorded, 20 were specifically experienced by women and 19 by men⁵.
- The majority of incidents were targeted at adults. However children were present for a minority of the incidents. Once again our findings indicate that men, women and children in Ireland are experiencing racism.
- Statistics reveal again that racism is being experienced regardless of someone's legal status. Refugees and asylum seekers, Irish and EU citizens, including Travellers and non-EU citizens are experiencing racism in Ireland. These can include students or people visiting Ireland as tourists.

Number of Incidents reported

Report	Period Covered	Number of Incidents Reported to the NCCRI
1	May 2001-October 2001	41
2	November 2001- April 2002	40
3	May 2002- October 2002	67
4	November 2002-April 2003	48
5	May 2003 – October 2003	46
6	November 2003–April 2004	42
7	May 2004 to October 2004	70

The incidents reported relate to three main areas, which are:

- Assaults, abuse and harassment
- Delivery of public and private services
- Misinformation and circulation of offensive material

⁴ Multiple reports about one incident are regarded as one racist incident in this report.

⁵ Remainder not specified or an incident was directed at a group of persons / family.

1. Assaults, Abuse and Harassment

Racist abuse and harassment and other forms of cultural disrespect was the most common form of incident reported to the NCCRI. There were also a number of serious assaults that took place that are highlighted in this section of the report.

Examples

- A South African national had an argument with her work colleague in a Dublin city centre canteen and was subjected to racial verbal abuse. Later on she saw an offensive note pinned to the staff notice board that she knew was meant for her. The next day she was laid off. She intends to take the matter further, either through her trade union or the Equality Authority.
- A group of female asylum seekers were racially harassed and abused at their accommodation centre in a rural area of Ireland by patrons of a local pub situated very near their accommodation centre. They also suffered sexual harassment and told that their asylum claims would be affected if they created any trouble. The Reception and Integration Agency were contacted and after investigating the claim, transferred the women to another accommodation centre.
- An American woman of Asian origin was subjected to racist verbal comments by a woman in a queue to get her lunch. The student said she was struck by the casual way that the insults were delivered and has stated that she suffers from this type of attitude and behaviour on a regular basis in Dublin and that the racism is directed at her because people perceive her to be “Chinese”.
- An African man was subjected to racist abuse by a group of men who also made monkey gestures towards him in Dublin city centre. A witness to the event reported it to the NCCRI and when he apologised to the man for the conduct of his fellow countrymen, the man replied that he was used to such abuse as he got it all the time.
- An Iraqi Muslim suffered damage to her property which she considered to be an Islamophobic attack as the culprit had scraped the words “Paki shit” onto her car. The woman lodged an official complaint with the Garda.
- A South African family experienced racist verbal abuse from a person in a blacked out car when out taking a walk by the beach in southern Ireland. The person kept stopping and starting the car in a very threatening and intimidating manner.
- A Pakistani woman and her child were at home in their rented apartment in a local housing complex when people tried to break into her apartment. She rang the guards and fled to the street. The two men who tried to gain entry to her apartment followed her, accompanied by a third person, and hurled racist comments and threats at her. One of the men struck her in the face. The woman fears for her life and the life of her child. She is desperate to be located in another area but she is afraid that she will face the same problem of racism there also. She intends to bring these men to court.

- A couple of nights after the referendum a Zimbabwean woman was walking along the street when a group of males shouted at her and asked her if she was starting to pack her bags for home.
- A Nigerian woman on her way to the Community welfare office was subjected to verbal abuse by a man in a car who shouted abuse such as “go back to your own country you stupid Black.”
- A Nigerian woman was verbally abused by a man in the same queue as her in the rural post office where he shouted at her to go home and stop milking the system, we don’t want you Nigerians or your babies here. The woman reported the incident to the local Garda station.
- A Nigerian asylum seeker is being subjected to a recurring situation of racist verbal abuse by a man in a car who shouts abuse at her from his car such as Black – go home to your own country, stupid Nigerian etc.
- A South African asylum seeker was attacked in the street by a group of Irish women and she was beaten on the legs and head while being insulted with racist comments. She reported the incident to the Garda who are treating the matter very seriously.
- A Filipino national and her child reported that they had been subjected to ongoing racist verbal abuse from their neighbour in Co Galway. The abuse was constant over a period of many months until the family were compelled to report it to the Garda.

Media Reports

It was reported in one of the Sunday newspapers in May 2004 that west Dublin had become so unsafe for immigrants due to intimidation and attacks that the Northern Area Health Board had to intervene and relocate families that were experiencing attacks or harassment on a daily basis.

In May it was reported in the Irish Independent that a “Lotto winner” allegedly spat at an African taxi driver and called him ‘a black bastard’. Garda had witnessed the verbal abuse. The newspaper also reported in May an incident where a woman was fined for verbal racial abuse to a doorman at a pub in Dublin.

In June the Star reported that a South African man suffered a savage attack in south Co Dublin. As he was getting out of his car, a gang of youths shouted at him “f**k off you black bastard” as they threw bottles and cans at him. He was punched and had an iron gate smashed over his head. He was rushed to hospital where he had to undergo plastic surgery to repair a deep cut to his arm and he received 12 stitches in his forehead.

In June the Star reported that four Chinese students had to leave their flat in fear after suffering a number of racist attacks. The first attack involved racist verbal abuse and one of the students received facial injuries from a stone thrown at him. More recently, a brick was thrown through a window of the students’ flat.

In July the Irish Times reported the results of a crime victimisation survey carried out by CSO office revealed that incidence of personal crime, including theft and assault had doubled in the last five years. Figures also showed that non-nationals were more

likely than nationals to experience crime. 6.9% of non-EU nationals are victims of personal crimes in 2003 compared to 5.8% in 1998. 74% of violent theft victims who are non-EU nationals do not report to Gardai.⁶

In August, the Irish Examiner reported that a settled Traveller family suffered a series of attacks and feared for their lives after ignited firelighters were placed under the back wheels of their car outside their house. This incident followed incidents such as name-calling and verbal threats. The Town Council for the area were assisting them in relocating.

The Irish Examiner reported in October that an African national was in hospital in a critical condition after being attacked by two men in Dublin city centre. The victim was in his 50s and a second non-Irish national was beaten up when he went to the victim's aid. The detectives were investigating whether it was racially motivated and the two men were arrested and were being charged under Section 3 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act.

The Star reported in October that a man was fined after he made racist and threatening remarks to a foreign fast food worker. It was reported in the Irish Examiner in the same month that four men from the west of Ireland passed racist comments before assaulting a pub bouncer on Christmas Eve 2003. The men were being charged under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act for assault in the Circuit Criminal Court.

In October the Star reported the story of a Nigerian mother and her family who were placed in local authority housing and were forced to move over written racist threats being slipped into her letterbox and their windows being broken. She has now moved and the Gardai are investigating the incident.

2. Delivery of Public and Private Services

There have been a number of incidents reported to the NCCRI in relation to the delivery of public and private services. The following serve as examples:

(1) *Public Services*

- A Nigerian man went to a Dublin police station to apply for inclusion on the register of electors for the local government elections. He claims that he was subjected to racist verbal abuse and humiliated by one of the Garda present and the officer retained his GNIB card. The man reported the incident to the Garda Racial and Intercultural Unit and his card was returned to him and he intends on reporting the incident to the Garda Complaints Board.
- A Polish national reported that she had received illtreatment from the personnel at a maternity hospital. When she asked to be treated by a female doctor after being treated in a humiliating way by a male doctor, she was refused the request and told that she would receive no treatment if she did not concede to be treated by a male doctor.
- A complaint was received by a Canadian citizen living in Ireland who is married to an Irish citizen. Her mother who is a foreign national living in France was refused a visa to enter Ireland on two occasions for reasons that her daughter

⁶ To view the report see <http://www.cso.ie/publications/labour/qnhscimeandvictimisation.pdf>

disputes as unreasonable. The daughter plans to settle down in Ireland and have children and she would like her mother to see her children on a regular basis.

- A Pakistani national made a complaint about institutional racism that he was experiencing as his business was suffering due to the fact that none of his international students could obtain student visas and he was subjected to harassment by the GNIB.
- A complaint was received in relation to the proposed Traveller Accommodation Programme in Co Clare, with allegations that the local authority had failed to consult with the local Traveller community and as a result, the plans serve to segregate the community behind walls, a scheme which the Traveller community are opposed to.

The Irish Times reported in July and August that deportations were being carried out and non-governmental organisations protested at the inhumane manner in which they were being conducted. They claimed that the deportations were happening during the night and with little or no access to outside help or support and that they were being carried out during the court holidays which made it more difficult to obtain an injunction. The Irish Refugee Council issued Interim Guidelines on Deportation on the 26 July 2004.⁷

In October the NCCRI called for the immediate removal of the barrier across Dunsink Lane that prevented Travellers from accessing Finglas Village. The NCCRI welcomed the decision of the local authorities to remove the barrier but would urge that future planning initiatives which impact on Travellers be carried out in consultation with the Traveller community to order to avoid further disputes. The NCCRI is concerned that such incidents have the potential to undermine the good progress that has been made in recent years to build up links between Travellers and local authorities and the Gardai.

(2) Private Sector

- An Irish Black woman was stopped at the check out of a well known supermarket chain in Dublin city centre because it was claimed that the signature on her statement did not correspond with the one on her credit card. She claims that she was harassed and verbally abused and the Garda were called in and she was arrested. It was after a long wait that the credit card centre were called to verify her account by which stage the woman was traumatised. She intends to bring the case to the Equality Tribunal and the Garda Complaints Board.
- An Israeli man and his child were treated in a discriminatory manner in a rural supermarket when the cashier asked to check his empty recycled bags that he brought to the shop to pack his groceries in. When he challenged her she said that this was store policy. However he waited around after to see if she operated the policy upon any other customers and she didn't. He felt very humiliated after the experience.
- A Black Irishman was asked for his green card and residency papers when he went to obtain insurance. He contended that he was only asked for this because he

⁷ See <http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/press04/deportation.doc>

had an African surname. He intends to report the incident to the Insurance Federation.

- A migrant family were threatened with eviction of their rented premises by their estate agent as he had received complaints from their neighbours regarding noise. The family claimed that they were very quiet and there had been no noise emanating from their flat. The family felt that they were being discriminated against on the basis of race. They will report the matter to Threshold, the housing advice agency.
- An Australian woman of Filipino background was refused entry to a Dublin city centre nightclub. The bouncer refused to give her a reason for the refusal and also refused to tell her his name. She considered the incident to be racially motivated.
- An African refugee reported ongoing racist verbal harassment and threats by his colleagues at his workplace. He reported it to his supervisor and manager and they said that there is nothing that can be done. The man in question was referred to his trade union for support and advice on the matter.

3. Misinformation and the Circulation of Offensive Material

Organisations working with minority ethnic groups continued to receive racist emails and letters, mainly containing offensive and inaccurate statements about refugees and asylum seekers. The NCCRI also received complaints that members of the Islamic community of Ireland have been receiving abusive telephone calls and hate mail following incidents of violence by militant Islamic groups that take place internationally.

There were reports of 'wogs out' graffiti appearing in the Galway area. The election posters of Labour's Ivana Bacik were defaced with graffiti, which said, 'Foreign Scum Go Home'. Also it was reported to the NCCRI that anti-semitic graffiti defaced steel doors of an elevator in a Dublin city centre apartment block saying "Jews Out". It was reported in the Irish Times at the end of August 2004 that the doors and windows of a church in Dundalk, Co Louth were covered with racist and anti-Semitic slogans and more than 20 graves were damaged at the church.

In October all the national dailies ran the story of repeated racist graffiti incidents at an African shop in Cork city with slogans such as "Burn Niggers out". A concerned member of the public reported a public notice that appeared on Dublin Bus in September stating that "work permits harm you and others around you". The NCCRI contacted the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland who said that as the poster was intended mainly to influence opinion about a matter of public interest, it was outside the jurisdiction of ASAI so they were unable to pursue the complaint. Dublin Bus was contacted and they removed the notices from their buses.

An Independent candidate for Dublin 7 disseminated a manifesto for the local elections that made derogatory statements about refugees and asylum seekers. The NCCRI also received a complaint in relation to the content of the election manifesto of the Immigration Control Platform which used offensive and inflammatory language about asylum seekers. The NCCRI received a complaint about the content of a website of one of the Independent candidates going for the local elections in June in the East constituency. The candidate invited members of the public to comment on his

manifesto which did contain a strong anti-immigrant focus. The member of the public who complained felt the comments recorded to be an incitement to hatred and physical violence.

On the 14 of June the Star reported that in Longford town a blow-up doll was hung on the railway bridge covered in Nazi swastikas. A cardboard sign reading: “Niggers go home, you’ll never be Irish” was stuck to the doll.

The Media

A complaint was received in relation to a radio broadcast of a well-known presenter on a programme covering the issue of the Citizenship Referendum where he gave ample airtime to the anti-immigration views of one of the independent candidates going for the local elections who expressed, in the view of the listener, shocking and inflammatory views about asylum seekers. Much of the material was inaccurate and went unchallenged by others on the programme. The listener intends to write to the show in question about the content of this programme. An article also appeared in a media periodical that was considered offensive and inflammatory to the Irish Jewish community.

The NCCRI also received a complaint at the end of August from a listener in the Cork area who expressed grave concern about the content of a show on a Cork based radio station where the presenter allowed people to voice offensive views in relation to asylum seekers and refugees which the listener considered to be unbalanced coverage of the issues. He has lodged a complaint with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

The NCCRI also received a number of complaints in relation to anti-Traveller offensive comments both in the print and broadcast media. There was also articles and columns reported to be Islamophobic by readers. A complaint was also logged in relation to an article that appeared in a Sunday newspaper in September which was considered to be very offensive to the asylum seeking community. It devoted a large amount of space to the so called benefits of being an asylum seeker which served to reinforce the myths and misinformation about the asylum seeking community.

The Internet

There were a number of complaints about the content of websites. One website was reported to contain anti-semitic content and another contained anti-Traveller sentiments referring to the Dunsink Lane incident “big group of subhuman scum currently living in Dunsink Lane”. It was report in the Observer on June 20 that a local authority had to shut down a bulletin board on its website because of racist comments posted there in advance of the citizenship referendum. The Garda were investigating the incident to ascertain who had posted up the remarks.

4. Recommendations

The forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR)⁸ advocates protection as one of the Plan's strategic objectives, enhancing protection against racism, including a focus on combating discrimination, assaults, incitement and abuse.

The NCCRI would make the following recommendations based on an analysis of reported racist incidents May to October 2004:

- The NCCRI have identified a need for a racist incidents monitoring officer with responsibility for the development and support of a national network for recording racist incidents in order to promote a localised response to tackling crime or discrimination motivated by racism. His/her work will inform one of the strategic objectives of the forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism, to enhance protection against racism, including a focus on combating discrimination, assaults, incitement and abuse. This objective sees the value in promoting a more proactive local community relations and partnership strategies to combat crime and discrimination motivated by racism.
- The completion of the review of the effectiveness of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 and a consideration of the effectiveness of legislation that provides general protection against assaults and abuse, including the Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and the Public Order Act 1994. Current legislation outlawing incitement to hatred and other relevant criminal legislation needs to be strengthened so that it is adequate in scope and that it provides for effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.⁹ Crimes motivated by hatred of particular communities including minority ethnic groups and other vulnerable communities should be considered as an aggravating factor in sentencing.
- Any review of existing legislation should cover the public dissemination of racist literature including the circulation of racist emails and should also seek to protect people against new forms of racism, such as racism through the Internet. The NCCRI is concerned about the adequacy of present legislation and/or its enforcement to deal with the dissemination of written or pictorial material with a racist content and about the circulation of misleading and abusive information circulated during election and referendum campaigns.
- There is a need for more vigilance against racism at times of international tension when reported racist incidents can increase. Additional strategies should be considered during such periods, including support where necessary for groups vulnerable to racism at these times.
- The role of the Gardai is key in providing protection to minority ethnic communities as is the ongoing work of the Garda Racial and Intercultural Unit and Garda ethnic liaison officers. There is a need to enhance the role, support

⁸ See National Action Plan Against Racism Steering Group; *Diverse Voices: A Summary of the Outcomes of the Consultative Process and a Proposed Framework for the National Action Plan Against Racism*. Stationery Office. July 2003 at www.justice.ie

⁹ Relevant criminal legislation include Prohibition of Incitement to Hated Act 1989, Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and Public Order Act 1994

and resources available to ethnic liaison officers. It is also important that the National Crime Council ensures a specific focus on tackling racist crime, consulting closely with minority ethnic groups and expert and specialised bodies.

- The NCCRI welcomes the recent data published by the Gardai on incidents motivated by racism.¹⁰ There is a need to enhance continuing efforts to record racist assaults and other manifestations of racism occurring in Ireland as an important way of planning more effective and targeted actions in tackling all forms of racism. This can be achieved through official crime and victim surveys and through Garda annual reports with an analysis of key trends.
- There should be impact assessments and ongoing reviews carried out of operational strategies or aspects of operational strategies that have prompted a cause for concern by NGOs such as large scale deportations operations.
- Women can experience particular forms of racism for example assaults and abuse directed at pregnant women arising out of the presumption that non nationals have children in Ireland for the sole purpose of residency. The protection against assaults and abuse should be monitored and proofed to ensure that they are fully inclusive of the experience of minority ethnic women.¹¹
- The continuing need for anti-racism and intercultural awareness training for all sectors including the media and the development of a whole organisation approach to designing and implementing an anti-racist and intercultural strategy.
- There is a continuing need for sections of the media, in particular local and regional media not to engage in sensationalising issues while respecting their right to report what is in the public interest. In particular more context and background should be provided where possible and to be careful not to label particular communities or compound myths and misinformation and confuse terminology. The deliberate defamation of a particular community over a period of time through processes of labelling and misinformation should be addressed through legislation and other strategies such as complaint processes like the proposed Press Council.
- The need to continue to challenge the small number of local politicians who make generalised, emotive and derogatory comments about minority ethnic groups.
- The need for a comprehensive and modern immigration and residency legislation.¹² Any forthcoming legislation should be equality ‘proofed’ to ensure that it is non-discriminatory across the nine grounds identified in the equality legislation and that it takes into account the provisions of the National Action Plan Against Racism.

¹⁰ See Garda Annual Report 2003 at www.garda.ie

¹¹ For further information see NCCRI submission to the Policing Plan 2004 at <http://www.nccri.ie/submissions/04NovPolicingPlan.pdf>

¹² According to the Government’s Legislation Programme, an Immigration and Residence Bill is due to be published in 2005.