

NCCRI
Reported Incidents
Relating to Racism

November 2002 – April
2003

National Consultative Committee on
Racism and Interculturalism

NCCRI Report of Incidents Related to Racism **November 2002 to April 2003**

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 These incidents are compiled into six monthly reports. The first report was published in October 2001, the second in April 2002 and the third in January 2003. This is the fourth report, which covers the period November 2002 to April 2003. The reports aim to:

- Provide an overview of racist incidents reported to the NCCRI in the six month period since the last report
- Draw out the key issues arising from the incidents logged
- Outline how the NCCRI has responded to the key issues identified in this report
- Make recommendations

Just under half of 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. There are a number of procedures in place by the NCCRI to check the veracity of the reports.

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.

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 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.). The report indicates how the NCCRI has responded to the general issues arising from the incidents. 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.

Analysis of Data

- There were 48 racist incidents² reported to the NCCRI between November 2002 and April 2003.
- 75% of incidents are reported as occurring in the greater Dublin area
- 19% of incidents are reported as occurring in urban areas outside of Dublin
- 6% of incidents are reported as occurring in predominantly rural areas

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

² Multiple reports about one incident are regarded as one racist incident in this report.

- Out of 48 incidents recorded, 12% were experienced by women and 58% by men³.
- The majority of incidents were targeted at adults. However children were present for a minority of the incidents. 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.
- 20 different nationalities have been identified as experiencing racism in this six-month period.

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

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

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. Part of the reason for this may be related to the general increase in violent crime in recent years. Although Ireland is in general a safe country there are worrying indications of an increase in violence related crime. Recently published statistics reported an increase of 105,840 in the total number of headline offences for 2002 compared with the previous year including an increase in the number of assaults⁴. It is therefore probable that if the general level of violence is increasing then violence motivated by racism is also likely to increase.

Examples

- A Cameroon man and his family experienced hostility at their place of residence on four occasions in a Limerick housing estate including racist jokes and verbal

³ Remainder not specified

⁴ Office of the Garda Commissioner Letter to the Minister regarding Crime Statistics 02/04/03.

abuse. On the last occasion a petrol can was set on fire outside his front door while he and his family were inside the house.

- A Kosovan man and his Irish wife were subjected to racist verbal abuse, death threats and damage to their property in a Dublin suburbs by a gang of youths. The family are so scared that they confine themselves to their house and only go out in their car. They have applied to Dublin Corporation to relocate but are too afraid to formally report it to the Garda for fear of reprisals.
- A Roma family suffered hostility at their place of residence in Tralee with racial verbal abuse such as ‘Go home refugee’ coupled with damage to their property. The Garda in the area gave the situation serious consideration and requested urgent alternative accommodation for the family.
- A Russian woman in Limerick was subjected to racist verbal abuse at the hands of a group of teenagers while being pushed to the ground. In Tralee a man shouted racist abuse at a Zimbabwean man cycling his bike during the day.
- An Algerian man was seriously assaulted in Dublin city centre by a group of men and women, hit by an iron bar and kicked in the head. He had to go to casualty. He reported the incident to the Gardai who said they would contact him but he received no further information.
- An Irish women of Muslim origin experienced racial verbal abuse from the driver of another car as she was waiting at traffic lights. She was terrified and reported the incident to the Gardai. A similar incident involved a Filipino man who managed to get the licence number of the person who shouted racial verbal abuse at him and he contacted the Garda Racial and Intercultural Unit in order for them to investigate the matter.
- An Indian man in a rural town was subjected to constant racial abuse by a group of school boys on his way to work. The man reported the incident to his workplace and the boys school but he received no response from the school. One of the boys mother called to his workplace and asked him to apologise to her son.

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

Administration of Justice

The NCCRI expressed concern at remarks made in February 2003 by a district court judge in Longford warning that ‘coloured’ people may soon be banned from shopping centres in the region as a consequence of shop lifting incidents. The NCCRI is concerned that the blaming of whole communities or identifiable groups for the actions of a few is extremely offensive and contributes to the stereotyping that feeds racist views. However the NCCRI welcomed the decision of the judge in question and another judge in Castlebar to apologise for remarks made about immigrants.

The NCCRI was also concerned about comments made by a local councillor in Longford in support of the judge’s remarks about his town becoming a dumping ground for refugees. However the NCCRI wishes to acknowledge the number of

organisations and individuals in the Longford area that came out in support of minority ethnic groups living there. The NCCRI highlighted the need for anti-racism and intercultural awareness training for all sections of the administration of justice including the judiciary and has met with the courts service around this issue.

Education

A South African teenager was subjected to racist verbal abuse by four of his classmates over a period. His mother approached the principal of the school who reprimanded the classmates in question. The students were asked to apologise to the victim and write a letter of apology. The racial taunts ceased.

A list of students names posted in Trinity arts building was removed, covered with white-supremacist graffiti and pinned to the notice board of the MPhil in Ethnic and Racial Studies. This incident highlights the need for the administration in universities and bodies such as the Union of Students in Ireland to continue to monitor and condemn racist incidents especially considering the alleged rise in extreme right-wing groups in universities that was reported to our office during this six-month period.

The NCCRI would advocate the adoption of a 'whole university/school approach' which includes the development of an intercultural and anti-racism dimension to all policies, from planning and evaluation to all aspects of the management of a school or university. This approach would focus on a long-term strategy to tackling racism and promoting interculturalism in the education sector.

Housing

A complaint was received from a group of Traveller families living in the west of Ireland. The complaint was in relation to the Group Accommodation Scheme for the Traveller community in Ennis. The residents of the site are objecting to the relocation of their site and the enclosure of the site behind a reinforced two metre high wall. The residents had a meeting with representatives of the local authorities outlining their objections and opposition to the proposed relocation and that they are waiting for the matter to be resolved through further negotiations. The residents claim that any attempts at negotiation with the Council since then have been ignored.

The enforcement of provisions of the Housing Miscellaneous Act 2002 by the Gardai in Mayo caused much controversy and tension with the Traveller community. The Irish Human Rights Commission, Pavee Point and other organisations are calling for a review of the legislation in light of it being contrary to the constitutional rights of the Traveller community in particular in terms of their right to equal treatment and non-discrimination in accessing adequate accommodation.

(2) Private Sector

- A man from Cameroon was refused entry to a shopping centre in Limerick city by the security guard because of his colour. A French national of Indian descent was refused entry to a nightclub in Temple Bar while his white friends were let in. He was told that this was because of his colour. A British national claimed discrimination on the grounds of race when he tried to buy a sandwich from a well-known chain in Dublin city centre.
- A landlord who rented out his property to non-Irish nationals was subjected to harassment by the residents association where his property was based in the suburbs of Dublin because they were opposed to his policy of renting out to Irish

and foreign nationals. The residents association also made serious unfounded allegations about his tenants.

- A Sudanese national claimed that he experienced discrimination on the grounds of race by a recruitment agency in Dublin and that a potential employer asked him questions that were wholly irrelevant to the job in question, namely questions about his religion and country of origin.

Migrant Workers

The NCCRI is deeply concerned that organisations working with migrant workers have reported that fear about losing their work permits are causing migrants not to report cases of racism and discrimination in the workplace. A number of organisations reported that if an employee took steps to inform the authorities about racial bias, the employer would often threaten not to renew a work permit. The NCCRI also notes that there has been a rise in the number of people claiming job discrimination on race grounds to the Equality Tribunal from 5 in 2002 to 33 in 2003, this figure excludes those alleging discrimination as members of the Travelling Community.

The NCCRI have consulted with various interested parties who are concerned with recent developments in relation to employment permits and migration policy in general. There is the worry that these changes will lead to a rise in undocumented workers and subsequent exploitation of same. The NCCRI would recommend an indepth local regional and national analysis of the current labour market and for that to be fed into a planned and managed migration policy for Ireland.

3. Misinformation and the Circulation of Offensive Material

The circulation of racist and linked offensive material continues, revealing a small number of extreme groups and individuals intent in stirring up racism and related xenophobia. One such leaflet was being circulated in Kerry looking for “racially conscious white men and women” who are ‘disgusted’ about what is happening in Ireland and it advertised a website and a mobile number to ring. A leaflet was circulated in Belfast by the White Nationalist Party (WNP) opposing the building of a mosque in Portadown which also advertised a website for more information. Websites continue to be a concern. Effective action to close such sites will only be forthcoming through increased global cooperation and the specific outlawing of such sites in the revision of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.

Racist and offensive e-mails, letters and texts continue to be sent to organisations working against racism. Eight different examples of racist mail (email and post) were forwarded to or received by the NCCRI in the six-month period covered by this report. In December 2002 a racist email was forwarded to the offices of the NCCRI and Irish Refugee Council. The NCCRI contacted the server company and they closed down the account as many server companies have a policy to terminate a customers use of their service if they find that their service has been abused, for example to transmit offensive or obscene material which would cause offence to others on the ground of race.

The Media

The role of the media in Ireland has been both positive and negative in its reporting on ethnic communities living in Ireland. Although the media has aided an understanding and awareness of key issues of public concern there have been examples of

irresponsible media reporting that can contribute to the labelling of certain communities such as refugees, asylum seekers and Travellers.

Sections of the media continued to print myths and misinformation about the refugee and asylum seeker communities. An article entitled “Refugees – the Truth” in March 2003 contained misinformation about asylum seekers claiming that they receive free satellite TV and other benefits while printing a ‘typical’ menu of an asylum centre. The newspaper in question only invited the Immigration Control Platform to comment on the issue but no comment was printed from organisations working with refugee and asylum seekers. This article served to endorse the misinformation and hyperbole about the refugee and asylum seeking community.

In the print media there were articles that confused terminology, misleading statistics, interchanging refugee and asylum seeker and equating the term refugee with that of the non-EU parent of an Irish born child which is not necessarily the case. This was particularly the case in the reporting of the Supreme Court decision on the right to residency of the parent of an Irish born child in January 2003. Such carelessness serves to confuse the public and fuel the myths and misinformation in the public mind regarding certain communities.

In one of the broadsheets, misinformation was given when it was reported that there were notices in embassies aiming to discourage refugees when in fact the article was referring to parents of an Irish born children, an entirely different category of people. The NCCRI has emphasised that it is very important that the correct terminology is used at all times so as not to compound the level of confusion already in the public.

A complaint was received about a phone in radio show broadcast in March 2003 regarding the racist abuse directed at an Algerian family in the suburbs of Dublin. Although the presenter did mediate the debate, it is regrettable that he gave one caller substantial airtime to voice her extremely racist views which may have been upsetting for many listeners.

University Media

In January a vox pop in a student newspaper at University College Dublin asked six white Irish students which ethnic minority they hated the most and why. The answers were of an offensive nature. The paper was greeted with outrage in university circles and the paper was forced to apologise. The editor of the newspaper was dismissed from his post. However it is regrettable that the same editor subsequently won three major awards in the 02 Student Media Awards.

The NCCRI welcomed the reaction of the university and the Union of Students in Ireland to the article. It is also notable in this regard that there was a recent survey by the Union of Students in Ireland in which 83% of respondents agreed that Ireland’s racial, religious and cultural diversity adds to its strengths. However the voxpop incident highlighted the need for more anti-racism and intercultural awareness at university level to make students more aware of the diverse society in which we live and the importance of respecting minority ethnic groups.

4. Recommendations

The summary of the outcomes of the consultative process for the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPR)⁵ proposes a framework for the forthcoming NAPR. It 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 like to see the many key recommendations on protection included in the final version of NAPR.

- The existing protection against assaults, incitement, verbal abuse and dissemination of material motivated by racism needs to be reviewed and enhanced as a matter of urgency. Current legislation outlawing incitement to hatred in the State 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.⁶
- 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 role of the Gardai is key in providing protection to ethnic communities as is the ongoing work of the Garda Racial and Intercultural Unit and Garda ethnic liaison officers. It is 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 protection against assaults and abuse should be monitored and proofed to ensure that they are fully inclusive of the experience of minority ethnic women.
- There is a need for disaggregated data in the number of 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.
- The need for anti-racism and intercultural awareness training for all sections of the administration of justice including the courts service and the development of a whole organisation approach to designing and implementing an anti-racist and intercultural strategy.
- That schools and universities would look to implementing a whole school/university approach⁷ in addressing racism and supporting cultural diversity and to establish mechanisms to both monitor and deal effectively with racist incidents.

⁵ 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

⁶ Relevant criminal legislation include Prohibition of Incitement to Hated Act 1989, Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and Public Order Act 1994

⁷ See NCCRI publication "Guidelines for Developing a Whole Organisation Approach to Addressing Racism and Promoting Interculturalism" (2003)

- The need for a planned and managed migration strategy with an emphasis on protecting the rights of migrant worker and on monitoring employer's adherence to employment law. Ongoing consultation with trade unions, non-governmental organisations, business federations and other interested parties is also seen as vital to the development of a fair and efficient migration policy for Ireland.
- 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 need to continue to challenge the small number of local politicians who make generalised, emotive and derogatory comments about minority ethnic groups.
- That the government transpose the Race Directive as a matter of urgency so that the minimum requirements in order to promote equal treatment of people regardless of their ethnic origin is in place in our equality legislation and that the government review and proof all legislation to ensure that it is not in contravention of the provisions of the Race Directive.