

Reported Incidents Relating to Racism

January-June 2005

**National Consultative Committee on
Racism and Interculturalism**

NCCRI Report of Incidents Related to Racism

January to June 2005

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 eight reports to date. This is the ninth report, which covers the period January to June 2005.³

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 bodies based on emerging issues.

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 tends 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.⁴

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 Gardaí (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 a 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. It should be further noted that research on combating crime

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

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

³ From January 2005 the reporting period will be January-June and July-December

⁴ For official statistics regarding racially motivated crime, see Garda Annual Report 2004 at www.garda.ie

motivated by racism is currently being undertaken as part of the Government's National Action Plan against Racism.

Analysis of Data

- There were 81 racist incidents⁵ reported to the NCCRI between January and June 2005.
- 73% of incidents are reported as occurring in the greater Dublin area
- 16% of incidents are reported as occurring in urban areas outside of Dublin
- 11% of incidents are reported as occurring in predominantly rural areas
- The majority of incidents were targeted at adults, both male and female. However children were present for some 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 people's legal status. Refugees and asylum seekers, Irish and EU citizens, including Travellers and non-EU citizens are experiencing racism in Ireland. Students and tourists also experience racism in Ireland.

Number of Incidents reported

Report	Period Covered	Number of Incidents Reported to the NCCRI
1	May - October 2001	41
2	November 2001- April 2002	40
3	May - October 2002	67
4	November 2002-April 2003	48
5	May - October 2003	46
6	November 2003-April 2004	42
7	May - October 2004	70
8	November 2004-Dec 2004	22 (Note for 2 Month Period Only)
9	January-June 2005 ⁶	81

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

⁵ Multiple reports about one incident are regarded as one racist incident in this report.

⁶ Note the new reporting period is January-June and July-December

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. A number of serious assaults took place; these are highlighted in this section of the report.

Examples:

- An Irish Muslim of North African origin was beaten up by a group of youths who repeatedly called him "Nigger" and "Bin Laden" and told him to "go back home" even though he has been living in Dublin for the past 20 years. He was hospitalised as a consequence of the attack.
- A Muslim female, teenager, of Irish-Jamaican origin was called "Osama bin Laden" by a group of young men while she went shopping. The woman felt that the comment had been made because she was wearing the Hijab.⁷ In a different incident she was called a "nigger" by a boy of 9-10 years. The incident was not reported to the Gardaí as the girl felt resigned to the fact that this sort of behaviour is common.
- An Irish Muslim woman was walking in the park with her children when a man accompanied by his bulldog approached. The man let the dog loose to scare the children and commented, "Arab shit". The incident was never reported as the woman thought the man was not from the neighbourhood and it was unlikely he would be brought to justice.
- A Nigerian national and her children were victims of racist verbal and physical harassment from their neighbours in a local authority housing estate. They also experienced damage to their property. Her husband was forced to leave the estate. The family were relocated to another housing estate
- A Pakistani family suffered verbal harassment from neighbours and had objects thrown at them.
- A Spanish employee in a Credit Union was subjected to verbal xenophobic abuse by a customer such as "bloody foreigners" when the customer did not get the service she expected.
- Two Congolese nationals were attacked by two young men in central Dublin. One of the young men attacked using a broken bottle and left a scar on one of the victims. The incident was reported and is being investigated by the Gardaí.

Media Reports of Racist Incidents:

- The Irish Times reported that in April, four men from county Kildare had been jailed for three years. They assaulted a Polish man who wanted to talk to a girl in their company. It was said in Court that the youths gave the Polish man a savage beating because they did not like to see a non-national talking to one of their friends.
- In February, the Irish Times interviewed a Chinese student. In describing her life as a takeaway delivery driver, she explained that she asks friends to come with her while she is working because she is afraid of being assaulted. Five times the windows were broken when she was in the car and the last time she

⁷ Islamic head scarf.

was hit in the neck with a golf ball. She was also insulted in Chinese by Irish teenagers.

- In January, the Irish Times reported a survey led by students in county Cork about the integration of foreign pupils in Irish schools. The survey revealed that these pupils often face bullying and exclusion.
- The Irish Independent reported in January that a Spanish employee of a baggage handling company was called a “Moroccan s—t” by a Ryanair official at Girona airport, Spain.
- In April the Irish Examiner reported that racist incidents are often experienced by the Chinese Community. A landlady attested that Chinese people, including a heavily pregnant woman, had a brick thrown through the window of their apartment in Dublin.
- A Nigerian boy who was returned to Ireland after being deported to Nigeria to complete his Leaving Certificate declared that his case has stirred up racial tension. Since his return, he was compared to scum because of the colour of his skin and he and his friends received racist threatening calls.
- The Irish Independent reported in April that a drunken man insulted two black people in a pub in Tallaght. The Gardai went there after receiving a complaint by phone call that someone was using the word “nigger”. The man pleaded guilty to charges of being drunk and disorderly.

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:

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- A Muslim man of Moroccan-Irish origin was questioned by Gardaí while waiting for his wife outside call shop. They handcuffed him and asked him for ID. He needed to get it from his wife’s bag and tried to enter shop to get it but Gardaí tightened grip on handcuffs and verbally abused him, including calling him a terrorist. They then charged him with a public order offence.
- Two males, one Indian Muslim and American Muslim, were waiting to board their flight in Dublin Airport. They were approached by armed guards who then took them to separate corners and asked for their passports. An officer took away the passports without any explanations on what was happening. Later, the officer brought back the passports, and when he was asked what was going on and why had these particular men had been singled out, he replied, "routine random checks". When the victims were asked why such a thing had happened, they explained that it was due to their appearance as Muslims as both of them were bearded. The incident was reported to the Islamic Foundation of Ireland.
- An Irish female Muslim went to collect her passport from the passport office. The officer behind the counter refused to process the passport as the woman had her hijab on in the picture. The application was not accepted and no apology was given. It was explained later that the officer behind the counter had never seen a Muslim woman before.
- A woman of Asian origin was verbally abused by a driver of Dublin Bus. She intended to report the incident to Dublin Bus.

Media Reports of Racist Incidents

- It was reported in the Irish Examiner in March that a Swedish man born in Gambia made a complaint in which he claimed a racial discrimination by an immigration detective at Henry Street Garda Station in Limerick. The detective did not believe that his Swedish passport was genuine because of the colour of his skin.
- The Irish Independent revealed in April that according to a survey, many Travellers hid their identity at school because they were afraid of not being accepted by other pupils. Almost all Travellers questioned said they suffered discrimination from both teachers and pupils in primary and secondary schools.
- A new report, reported by the Irish Independent in June said that hundreds of Roma children do not go to school because they are afraid of discrimination. An 11-year-old child said that it was difficult to make friends at school and that he was teased about his ethnicity.
- The Irish Times reported in January that a bus driver in Dublin refused to let a Chinese woman to get on the bus whereas he let the other passengers on. When she asked him why he did not let her on, he closed the door and left.
- In February, the Irish Examiner reported that direct provision centres that house asylum seekers would be inspected from April. These inspections are the result of complaints by asylum-seekers. Most of the complaints concern a lack of baby food supplies and meals, housing in cramped conditions and verbal assaults such as “Go to Africa for African food”.

(2) Private Sector:

- A British man rang for a job and was given a positive response, but when he came for the interview and the employer saw he was black, the response was negative. He claimed that this happened to him on five occasions with employers and it was due to the colour of his skin.
- An English man was bullied at work by his boss and colleagues. He was sent inappropriate emails, was verbally abused, and was denied his employment entitlements. He intended to report it to the Equality Authority.
- An Irish Muslim female went in for a job interview and during the course of the interview, the interviewer asked, referring to her hijab, "Are you allowed to work in that?" At a later stage, he commented, "You're never going to get that job with that thing on." once again referring to her headscarf. When she lodged a complaint with the company, the case was dismissed because of lack of evidence, as the interviewer denied making the comments.
- A student was told that there was a free room in a student village but when she came, she was told that there were no more rooms. The victim believes that they changed their mind when they saw she was black.
- A couple went to an insurance company to get a quote, but they were asked for a lot of irrelevant documents such as their passports, even when they said they were from the EU.
- An Irish woman, whose husband has Egyptian origins, had comments at work about the fact that he was black. The woman also complained about the fact that a colleague whose wife is African was the subject of racist jokes. Their child was called a “profiterole”. She decided to hide the fact that her husband is black.
- A mother and her son, both Irish nationals of Pakistani origin, were shopping in a large shop in Galway. The security guard on duty followed them every where they went in the store, to the extent that when he was asked why he was

following them, he replied that it is "routine" to do such a thing. When the son brought it to the attention of the management, the management apologised.

- A number of Spanish people were refused service in a pub in Swords and were verbally abused by the bar staff.

Media Reports:

- In January, the Irish Independent reported that an Australian woman with Afro-Caribbean origin was awarded €7,000 by the Equality Tribunal following racist comments by her manager who said that “a West-Indian employee is as useless as an African” and described people from the West-Indies as lazy.
- In February, the Irish Times reported that a Nigerian man claimed racial discrimination against a multinational company operating in Ireland as he had not been promoted in four years whereas those he trained rose above him.
- The Irish Independent reported in June that an Irish surgeon with Indian origin suffered racial insults. The surgeon claimed that his colleagues told him that he would never work again in orthopaedics in Ireland and one of them told him that he should go back to India. He also tried to apply to 18 different posts and each time he was unsuccessful.
- The Irish Examiner reported that Travellers complained about discrimination from the private sector in county Kerry, that they were not allowed to go into pubs, supermarkets, nightclubs etc.
- It was reported in the Irish Independent that a female refugee was sexually assaulted and was intimidated by her boss who told her that she would be deported if she complained to authorities about the attack in the workplace.
- In March, the Irish Examiner in March revealed abuses of migrant workers by some employers who take advantage of the fear among migrant workers for own benefit, as reported by a priest from Kilkenny. The report alleged that refugees are paid €1 and given bread to collect stones in fields.

Misinformation and the Circulation of Offensive Material

Asylum seekers in Sligo received an offensive letter from a group called “White Right Freedom Fighters” which stated “go back to Somali and take the rest of black bastards”. Non-governmental organisations working in anti-racism also received offensive emails and material during January – June 2005. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties received a letter with an article written by their Director which was smeared in faeces and contained offensive language.

Emails and Texts

An email was circulated claiming that a woman went to a gas station in Limerick and while she was paying, the shop attendant told her not to come back to her car as he saw someone going into it and that he called the Gardaí. When the Gardaí came, they discovered a ‘non-national’ man at the back of the car with a knife and a rope. The Gardaí in Limerick have stated that there is absolutely no foundation to this e-mail

Jewish organisations received emails with an anti-Semitic nature and the Irish Times reported in May that e-mails containing neo-Nazi contents were sent to Government departments, leading to the infection of a number of computers as they contained a virus. NCCRI received a racist email from a man who reproaches Irish people for “exporting the thieving travelling scum b*****ds to England”. He also said that “compulsory castration and sterilisation should bring an end to it all”.

There were reports of racist texts to the Last Word radio programme after Martin Collins from the Pavee Point Travellers Centre had been on reporting from Geneva on the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's examination of Ireland's first report. Residents Against Racism were being interviewed on Eamon Dunphy on Newstalk 106 and the show received racist texts and emails in response.

Graffiti

In January, the Irish independent reported that a racist graffiti was drawn in Dundrum, south Dublin. Someone wrote "No niggers" on the wall. Swastikas were daubed on the premises of various Jewish sites such as the cemetery or the Jewish museum. In May, the Irish Examiner reported that Nazi symbols (swastikas) and anti-Polish slogans ("Irish only", "F*** the Polish", "Polish scum", "F*** off home foreign scum") were drawn on the front walls and doors of private houses in Macroom, county Cork.

Anti-Semitism

There was a series of anti-Semitic incidents reported to the NCCRI by Jewish Community Watch between November 2004 and June 2005. Between January and June 2005 many incidents were reported to the NCCRI including abusive and threatening emails received by the Jewish communities in Dublin and Cork, swastikas daubed on premises linked to the Jewish community in Dublin and damage to property. The Irish Independent in May reported they had received anti-semitic emails

4. Observations and Recommendations

The NCCRI makes the following recommendations based on an analysis of reported racist incidents January to June 2005. The NCCRI supports the National Action Plan Against Racism⁸, launched in January 2005, which includes protection as a strategic objective, and includes a focus on combating discrimination, assaults, incitement and abuse.

- The NCCRI welcomes the Irish government's publication in April 2005 of an Immigration and Residence Discussion Document and an invitation for submissions before the 29 July 2005. This consultative process will feed into the drafting of an Immigration and Residence Bill 2005.⁹ 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
- The NCCRI welcomes the active participation of An Garda Síochána in the National Action Plan Against Racism and the high level action aimed at addressing racism and related inappropriate behaviour among some officers.

⁸ See Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan Against Racism 2005-2008 www.justice.ie

⁹ An Immigration and Residence Bill is due to be published in late 2005.

¹⁰ To view the NCCRI's submission to the Immigration and Residence Discussion Document see <http://www.nccri.ie/policy-submissions.html#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 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.
- NCCRI welcomes the research currently being undertaken as part of the National Action Plan Against Racism on the effectiveness of the criminal law in addressing racism. Current legislation prohibiting 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.¹¹ 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 such as the Jewish and Muslim community.
- The role of the Gardaí 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 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 data published by the Gardaí on incidents motivated by racism.¹² 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 Gardaí annual reports with an analysis of key trends.

¹¹ Relevant criminal legislation include Prohibition of Incitement to Hated Act 1989, Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and Public Order Act 1994

¹² See An Garda Síochána Annual Report 2004 at www.garda.ie

- There is a continuing need for anti-racism and intercultural awareness training for all sectors, including the media, and a need for the development of a whole organisation approach to designing and implementing an anti-racist and intercultural strategy.
- There is a need to continue to challenge the small number of politicians who make generalised, emotive and derogatory comments about minority ethnic groups.
- An annual public awareness campaign is recommended, similar to the one carried out by the NCCRI and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland “Racism is Illegal – You Have Rights” (March 2005); aimed at making potential victims and existing victims of racist crime and discrimination aware of their rights and encouraging the official reporting of incidents and/or reporting to the NCCRI.