

**Reported Incidents
Relating to Racism**

**November 2003
– April 2004**

**National Consultative Committee on
Racism and Interculturalism**

NCCRI Report of Incidents Related to Racism **November 2003 to April 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 five reports to date. This is the sixth report, which covers the period November 2003 to April 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
- Outline how the NCCRI has responded to these key issues
- 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 or 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.

The NCCRI focuses 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 the NCCRI seeks 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 42 racist incidents⁴ reported to the NCCRI between November 2003 and April 2004.
- 57% of incidents are reported as occurring in the greater Dublin area
- 19% of incidents are reported as occurring in urban areas outside of Dublin
- 24% of incidents are reported as occurring in predominantly rural areas
- Out of 42 incidents recorded, 25% were experienced by women and 37% by men.⁵
- The majority of incidents were targeted at adults. However children were present in a minority of the incidents.
- Racism is experienced regardless of one's legal status. Refugees and asylum seekers, Irish and EU citizens, including Travellers and non-EU citizens experience racism in Ireland. These can include students or people visiting Ireland as tourists.
- 15 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
5	May 2003 – October 2003	46
6	November 2003–April 2004	42

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

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.

Examples

- A Nigerian candidate for local elections in Galway received hateful and abusive mail, asking her to return to her own country. The mail was forwarded to the local Gardai.
- An accommodation centre for asylum seekers in Cork was broken into and vandalised. Residents were threatened and racist graffiti was sprayed on the emergency door. The residents stated that they were very frightened as there is no security in the house. They lodged a complaint with the local Gardaí but considered their response to the gravity of the incident to be inadequate.
- A Ghanaian family in Co. Dublin reported harassment from their neighbours. The abuse was both verbal and physical. The neighbours also threatened the family with deportation and said that they were watching them. The family made contact with the local Garda ethnic liaison officer.
- A man reported that a car belonging to visitors to his house was vandalised by a group of youths. The window of their sitting room was also broken and a child who was visiting got a piece of glass in his eye and had to attend the hospital. The incident was reported to the Gardaí.
- A witness reported a racist incident in Co. Dublin where a Chinese person was beaten up by a group of teenagers. He believes it to be racially motivated and he filed a complaint with the Gardaí.
- A South African woman reported ongoing racist incidents in a city centre housing estate. She has suffered verbal abuse, as well as local youths throwing stones at herself and her child. She reported the incident and stated that she got a satisfactory response from the Garda Racial and Intercultural Unit.
- A 17-year-old Congolese boy suffered racist verbal abuse in school. The boy was then attacked in the school by his peers. The principal sent him home but he was again attacked on the way home. He was sent to hospital and is afraid to return to school. His parents have reported the incident to the school principal and the Gardaí who have treated the matter seriously.
- A witness reported an incident in which two Irish women verbally abused two non-national males on a Dublin bus. The Gardaí were called but no arrests were made. The woman stated that the Gardaí did not treat it as a racist incident.

- A Croatian mother and daughter were attacked and jeered in Limerick, by a gang of children from the daughter's class. They also received racist insults. The incident was reported to the Gardaí and to the school principal.

At the end of November the national dailies carried the story of a Traveller family who's caravan was burnt down and were living in a tent after local residents stopped them moving into a short-term home. Around 40 residents staged a protest outside the home, with one of them holding a placard that said "Residents in – Travellers out". One resident claimed, "If the Traveller family is allowed to move in, the price of our houses in the estate will go down. There are no circumstances in which we will allow the Traveller family to move in". The Traveller family subsequently refused a home they were offered in the same place because of intimidation fears.

At the end of March 2004 the Irish Independent reported a shooting incident in a town in Kerry where a shot was fired through the front window of an occupied bedroom of a house belonging to a settled Traveller family. A local councillor was reported as saying that there have been a number of violent incidents in the same town in recent months, for example an incident where men in balaclavas had broken down the door of a caravan and smashed it up.

In March 2004 the Irish Examiner reported that a town in Waterford was cordoned off to prevent a Traveller 'entourage' from setting up an illegal encampment in the town. For the second time in five days, the roundabouts at all the main entrances were manned by Gardai following a tip-off that a large group of Travellers were heading for the town. A Garda spokesman was reported by the paper as saying that the operation will be in place as long as it takes in order to ensure that the town is 'never again plagued by the outrageous breaches of bye-laws and trespass laws the town and townspeople have had to endure in the past from other Traveller groups'.

In December 2003 the dailies reported that vandals attacked a new Traveller halting site in Co. Clare. The perpetrators had daubed "Knackers out" and "Keep filth out" on the wall of the site. The Traveller family were forced to spend Christmas on an illegal halting site because of fears for their safety if they moved into a serviced site two miles away.

In December 2003 the Irish Times reported a case of a man who has pleaded not guilty to inciting racial hatred on a bus has been adjourned for hearing. The man is accused of inciting hatred by using the words "You black bastard, go home to where you came from".

The Irish Independent reported in December 2003 that the Cork County Board is to hold an investigation after it was alleged that two brothers were racially abused at a club football game. It is understood that racial remarks were directed from a section of the crowd towards one of the brothers in particular.

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*

- An asylum seeker reported that he was verbally abused by a member of staff of a direct provision accommodation centre.
- A Romanian woman reported that a doctor she visited made remarks about her nationality and marital status. She made a complaint to the Irish Medical Council.
- An Irish Muslim who was applying for a new passport was told that she would have to change her photographs as she was wearing a headscarf. The lady in the passport office said that her hair had to be showing and that this was normal for all Muslims under Irish regulations. She complained to the Garda Intercultural office and an official apology was received from the passport office.
- A Romanian woman with a disability was asked for her ticket on board a train. When she produced her free travel pass the rail worker refused to believe that the pass belonged to her and subsequently removed it from her. The woman was very upset and was forced to apply for a replacement card.
- An Irish Muslim whose parents are from Pakistan was hassled and asked for identification by the Special Branch when he and his cousin was walking in Galway city. The man described the two officers as being very ignorant and hostile. They were asked where they are from, even though one of them was Irish.

There were also reports in the print media in April 2004 regarding the large-scale Garda operation in carrying out deportations of failed asylum seekers and 'illegals'. Many organisations working with asylum seekers criticised the manner in which these operations were carried out, stating that there were pre-dawn raids on houses with deportations taking place at night, with families being given no access to the outside world and allegations that minors were being questioned without their parents being present. There were calls for maximum transparency in the carrying out of such deportations, proper training for staff carrying out these operations and fullest regard for the dignity of the people involved.

(2) *Private Sector*

- An Italian man was refused entry twice to a pub in Dublin city centre. The first time he was with Italian friends and they were told that it was because the bouncers did not know them. The second time he was with some Irish friends who were allowed in but him and his fellow Italians were refused entry as the bouncers said that they did not know them. When their Irish friends stated that the bouncers didn't know them either, the bouncers informed them that the two Italians could not get in for security reasons.

- A South African woman was asked for her passport and green card before being refused service in two pubs in Dublin city because she didn't have a green card. The woman, who is a student, wanted to pursue the matter further but was unable to bring a case of discrimination against a public house on the grounds of race to the District Court as she couldn't afford a solicitor.
- An Irish Muslim complained that her employer would not let her wear a headscarf, stating that no religious clothing was allowed in the workplace. The woman intends taking a case against the employer to the Equality Tribunal.
- A Kurdish man lodged a complaint regarding the inaccurate coverage in a provincial newspaper of a Kurdish man caught for theft. He claimed that the man caught was not Kurdish and this article gave the Kurdish community a bad name. He also stated that both Turkish and Kurdish nationals were being refused entry to certain licensed premises in the area.

It was reported in the Irish Times in November 2003 that racism complaints have outnumbered sex discrimination cases for the first time. 33.6 per cent of cases currently taken under the Employment Equality Act are on race-related grounds, while the corresponding figure for gender discrimination is 26.2 per cent.

It was reported in the Irish Times in December 2003 that the Mayor of Killarney had asked shop security personnel to be more discrete following criticisms made on the Joe Duffy *Liveline* show on RTE. A Traveller complained that when he and his wife went into town they were 'followed around' and he claimed that there is no point complaining to shop managers because there is prejudice against Travellers.

In March 2004 the national dailies reported that a house for rent advertisement in a local paper in Galway had stipulated 'no coloured' need apply. The newspaper apologised about printing the advertisement claiming that it was a misprint.

In November 2003 the Irish Times reported that a Lebanese-born doctor lodged a complaint of racial discrimination against the Medical Council. The doctor claims that he was dealt with in a racist manner when he was punished by the Council for the advertisement of cosmetic services as other Irish doctors who committed the same offence were not treated in a similar fashion to him.

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. Three examples of such e-mails was received by the NCCRI, one of which contained a link to a website. A complaint was made about various comments made on a Dublin community website that referred to the area being used as a dumping ground for refugees. Other comments suggested that ethnic minorities are being given provisional licences without being able to drive and are causing problems within the area.

The Media

During this period there were examples of irresponsible media reporting surrounding the announcement of changes in the welfare regulation for citizens of Accession states and the announcement of the referendum on citizenship. Although it is important to emphasise that there were instances of balanced and positive coverage of issues affecting minority ethnic groups in this period, it is regrettable that many articles printed served to reinforce myths and misinformation in the public mind regarding certain communities. For example a daily tabloid in January 2004 carried an article entitled “See You In May” claims that tens of thousands of citizens of EU accession states are poised to flock to Ireland and Britain when the EU expands on May 1. Another daily newspaper reported in early March 2004 that the new migrant law “will weed out welfare scroungers”.

The referendum on citizenship also had a prominent place in the print media in the lead up to referendum day on June 11th. It is important to emphasise that there were many examples of fair reporting on the debate on citizenship in the print media. On the other side there were also examples of headlines such as “Non-national births demand another maternity hospital” and “Citizenship main motive for up to half of non-EU mothers” which served to sensationalise the matter instead of contributing to an informed balanced debate on the substantive issues involved.

The NCCRI also received a complaint about a journalist in a national daily newspaper which considered the article to be Islamophobic when he called Muslims ‘illiterate’ and ‘subversive’. The reader felt that such comments were likely to stir up hatred and resentment towards Muslims.

An article in a local newspaper in the midlands reported how an Independent candidate was campaigning that non-nationals should not be allowed to vote in the local elections, saying that social welfare fraud is costing the taxpayer Euro 350m a year, which is coming out of the health budget and implying that this is due to non-nationals.

An article was forwarded to the NCCRI from a local newspaper in the west of Ireland claiming that asylum seekers get hand outs from the Government and that Ireland was being taken advantage of by non-nationals because it is a soft touch. The information contained in the article had many factual errors and was considered offensive to the asylum seeking community.

Public Representatives

A complaint was received in relation to an article in a local newspaper which quoted a local councillor urging his Council to evict Travellers from their land as they are creating an ‘eyesore on their doorsteps’. A community group in Dublin forwarded an election leaflet of a local councillor for their area, which stated that he believed the Traveller accommodation programme should be abandoned. It was also reported in one of the daily newspapers that a Dublin county manager was to send allegedly racist letters objecting to a social and affordable housing scheme to the Equality Authority.

An article was forwarded to the NCCRI that explained how the British Nationalist Party (BNP) had announced that they are happy to support the ‘Keep Ireland Irish’

campaign. The article claimed that the immigrant situation in Ireland is ‘catastrophic’ with Africans, Albanians and Roma gypsies ‘flooding in’.

The NCCRI, to mark International Day Against Racism on March 21, invited senior members of all the main political parties in Ireland to endorse the all party anti racism election protocol in an effort to ensure that the forthcoming local and European election campaigns would be conducted in a manner free from racism.⁶

4. Recommendations

The forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR)⁷ advocates protection as one of the Plan’s strategic objectives, enhancing protection against racism, including a focus on combating discrimination, assaults, incitement and abuse. It is important for targeted actions arising out of the NPAR to take account of the intersection between racism and other forms of discrimination such as gender, age, disability and sexual orientation.

The NCCRI would make the following recommendations based on an analysis of reported racist incidents November 2003 to April 2004:

- 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 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.⁸ 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 minority 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.
- The NCCRI also welcomes the introduction of the new Garda Bill 2004. While it is important to highlight the excellent work that has been done in building up relationships with minority ethnic communities within An Garda Síochána, there have been complaints in reports alleging Garda as perpetrators of racist incidents or inaction or lack of response by Garda to reports of racially motivated attacks. Certain provisions of the new Bill will assist in alleviating this concern.

⁶ To view the Anti-Racism Political Protocol for Political Parties in Ireland see www.nccri.com

⁷ 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

⁸ Relevant criminal legislation include Prohibition of Incitement to Hated Act 1989, Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and Public Order Act 1994

- The NCCRI welcomes the recent data published by the Gardai on incidents motivated by racism.⁹ 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.
- The Know Racism Campaign conducted a survey in 2003 and the results were published in March 2004. The survey found that Travellers and asylum-seekers are the groups viewed most negatively by the majority population. 54 per cent of people believe that most asylum-seekers are bogus, while a fifth said that Travellers should not have the same rights as the settled community. Results of surveys such as these reinforces the need for an ongoing publicly funded public awareness campaign.
- The 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 need to continue to challenge the small number of local politicians who make generalised, emotive and derogatory comments about minority ethnic groups especially in light of the forthcoming local elections. It is important for the political parties that have signed up to the Anti-Racism Protocol for Political Parties to monitor their candidate's adherence to its contents.
- The need for a comprehensive and modern immigration and residency legislation.¹⁰ 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.
- The NCCRI welcomes the enactment of the Equality Bill 2004 which seeks to further enhance existing equality provisions. This is important particularly in light of the fact that discrimination on the grounds of race continues to prevail in the provision of goods and services, both public and private and in the employment field. However it is regrettable that as a result of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003, that complaints against licensed premises under the Equal Status Act 2000 are being dealt with by the district court and not by the Equality Tribunal. This transfer of jurisdiction raises questions of access for members of the Traveller community and minority ethnic groups.

⁹ See Garda Annual Report 2003 at www.garda.ie

¹⁰ According to the Government's Legislation Programme, Spring Session 2004, published on 25 January 2004, an Immigration and Residence Bill is due to be published in 2004.