

An Coiste Comhairleach Náisiúnta
ar Chiníochas agus Idirchultúrachas

National Consultative Committee
on Racism and Interculturalism
20 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2.

☎: (+353 1) 4785777
Fax: (+353 1) 4785778
Email: nccri@eircom.net
Website: www.nccri.com



National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism

Report to Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

September 2003

Introduction

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) was established in 1998 as an independent expert body focusing on racism and interculturalism. The NCCRI is a partnership body which brings together government and non-government organisations to:

- Develop an inclusive and strategic approach to combat racism by focusing on its prevention and promoting an intercultural society
- Contribute to policy and legislative developments and seek to encourage dialogue and progress in all areas relating to racism and interculturalism
- Encourage integrated actions towards acknowledging, celebrating and accommodating cultural diversity
- Establish and maintain links with organisations or individuals involved in addressing racism and promoting interculturalism at national, European and international level
- Provide a national framework for responding to and consulting with key European and international bodies on issues related to racism and interculturalism.

1. Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/4 of 14 April 2003

The NCCRI notes that the Special Rapporteur, by virtue of Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/4 of 14 April 2003 is to examine the situation of Muslim and Arab peoples in various parts of the world with special reference to physical assaults and attacks against their place of worship, cultural centres, businesses and properties in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001. The following gives an overview of the situation for Muslim and Arab people in Ireland in the aftermath of September 11th.

Ireland's 2002 Census of Population indicated that the religious profile of Ireland has changed significantly over the last 10 years. The number of Muslim people in Ireland has quadrupled to 19,000 from the 1991 Census, when the religion question was last asked. Many of these have been living in Ireland for many years and are Irish citizens. It is also estimated that a sizeable percentage of the Muslim community in Ireland are asylum seekers and refugees, mostly from countries such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Algeria and Somalia.

NCCRI Racist Incidents Reporting Procedure

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, the third in January 2003 and the fourth in June 2003. These reports aim to provide an overview of racist incidents reported to the NCCRI in a given six month period, draw out the key issues arising from the incidents logged and make recommendations based on the issues raised.

Normally the incidents included in reports have been forwarded by non-governmental organisations on behalf of the victim, including key organisations working with

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

Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and migrants. Some incidents are reported directly to the NCCRI by the victim. The reports do 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.

This system is complementary to the system of the police service (An Garda Siochana). The Garda introduced the recording of racist incidents through the Garda PULSE system in March 2002 and its annual report for 2002 is due to be published shortly. This report will contain for the first time statistics relating to incidents motivated by racism.

Overview of Incidents Relating to Racism

There were 41 racist incidents reported to the NCCRI between May and October 2001. The report shows that almost one fifth (20%) of all incidents recorded between May and October 2001, were directly related to September 11th. There were incidents reported of physical assaults and verbal abuse against the Islamic community and also those perceived to be of middle-eastern or Asian origin, including visitors to Ireland, migrant workers and refugees and asylum seekers.

The NCCRI noted at the time that many of these incidents appeared to be isolated and uncoordinated. However they did give rise to particular concern, especially as some of the incidents have involved serious assaults, abuse and destruction of property.

Examples of the type of incidents include

- A small number of abusive phone calls being made to members of the Islamic community in Dublin. However most calls to the Foundation and the Islamic Cultural Centre have been of a supportive nature. There have also been some reports of an increase in verbal insults directed at women in Islamic dress.
- The attack on a Mosque in Belfast. Bricks were thrown at the Mosque in Wellington Park, Belfast on 14th September 2001. No one was hurt in the incident.
- Concern about the speculation and sensationalized nature of some of the stories in the Irish and international media about alleged existence and links between Irish based Islamic militants and events related to September 11th.
- A young woman of Japanese ethnic origin and who is a French national and a visitor to Ireland was walking down a street in Dublin in broad daylight and was assaulted by a man on a motorbike. The man stopped his motorbike (he had a child as a pillion passenger), he slapped the young woman across the face and blamed her for the attacks on America. The impact on the woman was profound. She stayed in her house for four days after the attack. She has since returned to France.
- In Tralee, Co Kerry a male Yemeni national who is an asylum seeker in Ireland was hospitalized following an attack outside a supermarket as he was making a phone call. His assailants allegedly blamed him for being responsible for the September 11th attacks on the United States.
- A teenager who is a member of the Sikh community in Ireland was assaulted outside the RDS in Dublin 4 area with a thrown bottle and with verbal abuse

and blamed for September 11th. A doctor, also a member of the Sikh community in Ireland, has reported a significant increase in verbal abuse towards him in the wake of September 11th.

- An Algerian asylum seeker who arrived in Ireland just after the September 11th attack requested and was granted relocation to a larger town as a consequence of his perceived fears living in a small rural town in County Cork.
- An asylum seeker had his motorbike destroyed by an arson attack directly after the September 11th attack. He believes that the attack was a direct result of the September 11th attack and was connected to a number of youths who shouted verbal abuse shortly before the damage to his property.

The NCCRI responded to these incidents by drawing up a report of incidents that was submitted to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism (EUMC) as part of a European wide initiative.² It also contacted the reporting agencies to offer support and to investigate what further action could be taken, including reporting to the Gardai, Equality Authority or local authority. The NCCRI also met with representatives from the Islamic Community and the Sikh Community in Ireland and wrote to the Chairperson of the 'Know Racism' campaign (a government campaign) to ensure that Islamophobia and related racism were included in the recently launched national anti-racism awareness programme.

The NCCRI Report Relating to Racism November 2001 – April 2002 noted a significant decrease in the number of assaults and incidents of harassment reported to the NCCRI compared with the period covered by the first report. The previous high level of assaults was explained by the charged atmosphere that followed the aftermath of September 11th, when assaults were directed against people perceived to be Islamic or from middle-eastern origin.

The leadership role of the Government played in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks demonstrated through visits to the Islamic Cultural Centre in Dublin and the issuing of press statements condemning attacks on the Islamic community has been identified by the Islamic community as an important factor in creating a calmer environment in the wake of the September 11th attacks.

The last two reports related to racism (May to October 2002 and November 2002 to April 2003) reported isolated incidents experienced by the Islamic community. A woman in Islamic dress was denied access to changing rooms in a large department store in Dublin and was subsequently accused of trying to steal goods. The security guard was summoned and immediately cleared the woman of any wrongdoing. The woman suffered considerable distress as a result of the incident. An Irish woman 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.

The nature of some media reports were highlighted to the NCCRI. In the immediate aftermath of September 11th some newspaper reports sought to sensationalise alleged links between Irish based Islamic militants and Osama Bin Laden. For example a

² The NCCRI in partnership with the Equality Authority is the EUMC National Focal Point on Racism in Ireland.

photograph of an Algerian man with his young daughter was published in one national newspaper, despite the fact that he had not been charged with any crime. The accompanying newspaper headline was “Islamic militants on our doorstep” (Irish Examiner 18 September 2001)

A report was forwarded by a representative organisation of the Islamic community referring to an article in a local newspaper, which states ‘Can the evil that is Islam, at least in part be changed.’ And ‘If Arab countries cannot control their criminal monsters, someone else will have to do it for them.’ A further report also objected to the insensitivity of a journalist of national tabloid paper ‘door-stepping’ Muslim men as they entered a Mosque to pray. This year 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.

The Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland have recently indicated that there continues to be sporadic incidents related to racism experienced by the Islamic community, possibly as a result of September 11th but that it is not the same level as in the immediate aftermath. The Centre also said that women seem to be a particular target. For more information, please contact Summayah Kenna, Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, 19 Roebuck Rd, Clonskeagh, Dublin 4. ++ 353 1 208 0000.

Conclusion

The police service of Ireland established a Garda Racial and Intercultural Office in July 2000. This office is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and advising on all aspects of policing in the area of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. In March 2002, the Racial and Intercultural Office announced that 145 Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers were being appointed across the country who will be given training in dealing with people who have been the victims of racism and who will make proactive linkages with community and voluntary groups working closely with minority ethnic groups in their areas. It is hoped that initiatives such as these will have a deterrent effect on potential perpetrators of incidents motivated by racism including those targeted at Muslim and Arab peoples in Ireland.

The negative reaction against Muslims in the wake of the September 11th attacks on the United States and the rise of the far right in many EU countries has given rise to concerns about the potential for increased Islamophobia in Ireland. The NCCRI will seek to:

- Monitor developments in relation to anti-Semitism and Islamophobia
- Liaise with the communities concerned
- To identify possible public policy responses where appropriate
- To monitor other instances where racism intersects with ethnicity and religion

2. Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/41 of 23 April 2003

The NCCRI notes that the Special Rapporteur by virtue of Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/41 of 23 April 2003 is to update and expand the study on the issue of political platforms which promote or incite racial discrimination.

It is to be welcomed that there is a broad consensus within political parties in Ireland to address racism. All the parties in the Oireachtas have signed and reaffirmed an anti racism protocol governing the conduct of elections, which gives a commitment to sending a clear and positive message to their constituents that they reject racism. (See Appendix 1 for the text of the Protocol)

However the blaming of minority ethnic groups for creating racism in Ireland and the adoption of racist slogans such as 'Ireland for the Irish' and the use of emotive language that refers to 'invasions' and 'colonisation' by a small number of groups and individuals in Ireland, has a resonance with the language adopted by extreme organisations in other European countries. To date, there has been little evidence of such groups being widely supported, although some may quietly share their views.

In 2002 during the debate on Ireland's ratification of the Nice Treaty, some campaigners on the 'No' side adopted anti immigration and xenophobic arguments and made emotive and misleading statements on the potential of mass inward migration into Ireland from EU accession countries. The NCCRI welcomed the rejection of this argument from many of those involved in both the 'No' and 'Yes' campaigns. The referendum was carried by the 'Yes' campaign by a significant majority.

There was an upsurge in racist and linked offensive literature in the period, some of which was clearly linked to securing votes in the forthcoming general election. There were five different circulars of a racist or neo racist nature received by the NCCRI from recipients. Four of these circulars had no named organisation claiming ownership of their contents.

The remaining leaflet was widely circulated by a small organisation advocating immigration control and opposing the development of further cultural diversity in Ireland. The language and tone of the leaflet was emotive and offensive and included partial and misleading information. The key area targeted for the leaflet drops was Dublin 7, an area that is becoming increasingly culturally diverse. Subsequent to the leaflet drop, the organisation announced that it was putting forward two independent candidates in the general election in constituencies in Dublin and Cork. Both candidates polled poorly, which is in contrast to the fortunes of some parties espousing similar policies in other parts of Europe. However this organisation continues to have a profile in discussions around immigration issues.

In July 2002, a self styled group of 'concerned citizens' in Limerick distributed pamphlets, inviting people to visit a website that contains racist material. The NCCRI have identified at least six racist websites with a specific focus on Ireland purporting to represent the Irish National Front, the Irish Fascist Party and an organisation called 'NSRUS'. In 2003 it was reported in the media that NSRUS withdrew their website from Ireland claiming that Ireland was not ready for the white supremacist viewpoint.

In 2003 a 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. Another 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.

The emergence of websites and their flouting of existing legislation is a new and disturbing development in Ireland, even if only a small number of people are involved in publishing such sites. It provides a potential means of recruitment for racist organisations, with many sites focussing in on young people through 'clubs' and 'chat rooms'. 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 Irish legislation such as the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.

The circulation of misinformation and offensive and outright racist material can play a role in contributing to creating the conditions where racism, including racist violence is more likely to occur. It is also clear that there is a tension between the importance of protecting free speech and allowing people to express their views and fears on one side and protecting people from being subjected to misinformation and offensive material that can contribute to racism through stereotyping and labelling over a sustained period of time.

Conclusion

Legislation outlawing incitement to hatred in the State needs to be strengthened in acting as a deterrent for potential perpetrators of racial crime. Any review of current Irish legislation should also seek to determine if the legislation is adequate to protect people against new forms of racism, such as racism through the Internet.

The role of political parties in monitoring and responding to any deviation from the Anti-Racism Protocol covering elections is important in light of the conduct of certain candidates during the general election in May 2002 and the lead up to the Nice referendum in September/October 2002. There is also the need for the NCCRI to continue to monitor and challenge the small number of local politicians and organisations who are intent on making generalised, emotive and derogatory comments about minority ethnic groups.

Key Responses: National Action Plan Against Racism

The United Nations World Conference Against Racism was held in Durban, South Africa in September 2001. One of the key outcomes of the Conference was the commitment by participating countries to develop National Action Plans Against Racism. The development of a National Action Plan Against Racism in Ireland represents a significant opportunity to both build upon and enhance existing policies and strategies to address racism in Ireland and to identify new priorities, aspirations and arenas of work that can be drawn together into an overall cohesive plan.

The National Action Plan will reflect the outcomes of the consultative process undertaken by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform between March and December 2002 which was overseen by a broad based Steering Group representing government and non-government organisations with support from the NCCRI. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform have recently published the summary of outcomes of the consultative process entitled “Diverse Voices”.³

One of the key objectives identified in the summary of outcomes of the consultative process for the National Action Plan Against Racism is protection. Objective One states that

“The NPAR should seek to enhance protection against racism, including protection against discrimination, assaults, incitement and abuse”⁴

The NCCRI acknowledges that there are already measures in place that seek to provide protection against discrimination, incitement to hatred and general protection against assaults and abuse. However the NCCRI is of the view that these measures could be strengthened and made more effective. During the consultation process the following recommendations were made in relation to protection issues for minority ethnic groups:

- The existing protection against assaults, incitement and abuse and dissemination of material motivated by racism needs to be comprehensively reviewed and enhanced
- Close monitoring of the experience of minority ethnic groups vulnerable to events at an international level and responding with appropriate support strategies
- The importance of monitoring, analysing and publishing reports of racist incidents made to the Gardai on an annual basis to inform appropriate policing and related responses
- The importance of national crime and victim surveys
- The enhanced role, support and resources available to Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers
- Further development of anti-racism and intercultural strategies in An Garda Síochana – the adoption of a whole organisation approach to address racism and promote interculturalism
- All policies related to protection issues should be gender proofed as women can experience particular forms of racism. Protection against assaults and

³ The report, entitled ‘Diverse Voices’, is available online at www.justice.ie

⁴ Diverse Voices p12

abuse including domestic violence should be monitored and proofed to ensure that they are fully inclusive of the experience of minority ethnic women

- The need for disaggregated data on the protections provided against racism, including incitement, assaults and related abuse. The availability of data is an important means of tailoring more effective and targeted actions and benchmarking progress in tackling these forms of racism.

The NCCRI would be happy to elaborate on any of the points raised in this submission and should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact Kensika Monshengwo, Acting Director or Jacqueline Healy, Information & Communications Officer at the address below.

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism
20 Harcourt Street
Dublin 2.
Tel: ++ 353 (0) 1 478 5777
Fax: ++ 353 (0) 1 478 5778
Email: nccri@eircom.net
Website: www.nccri.com

APPENDIX 1

An Coiste Comhairleach Náisiúnta
ar Chiniúchais agus Idirchultúrachas
National Consultative Committee
on Racism and Interculturalism

Anti Racism Protocol for Political Parties

Anti Racism Protocol for Political Parties in relation to the conduct of election campaigns

Preamble

Political parties who are signatory to this Protocol undertake to ensure that election campaigns¹ are conducted in such a way that they do not incite hatred or prejudice on the grounds of 'race', colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, religious belief and membership of the Travelling Community².

Political parties agree:

- To send a consistent and clear message to their constituents that they reject racism.
- To condemn any campaign materials or statements susceptible to incite hatred or express prejudice on the grounds of 'race', colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, religious belief and membership of the Travelling Community.
- To guarantee that when engaging in on-going debate in relation to groups, which are the potential targets of racism, such as asylum seekers and refugees and Travellers, that such debate is conducted in a responsible way and with respect to the dignity and rights of minority ethnic groups.
- To use appropriate and inclusive language and words when referring to people of different ethnic backgrounds, in order to avoid creating prejudice or confusion.³
- To inform all party-political campaigners about the intent and contents of this protocol.
- To request that candidates standing for election sign the appended 'Declaration of Intent'.

1. Including local elections, general elections, and elections to the European Parliament.

2. These are the relevant categories in the Equal Status Act (2000) and the Employment Equality Act (1998).

3. For example, the terms 'asylum seekers', 'refugees' and 'economic migrants' are not interchangeable. The use of pejorative terms such as 'bogus asylum seekers' and 'itinerants' should be avoided.