

CAJ's submission no. 264

**CAJ's Submission to the  
Northern Ireland Policing Board *in relation  
to issues for the*  
Human Rights and Professional Standards  
Committee**

Submitted October 2009

Promoting Justice /  
Protecting Rights

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## *What is the CAJ?*

The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) was established in 1981 and is an independent non-governmental organisation affiliated to the International Federation of Human Rights. CAJ takes no position on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and is firmly opposed to the use of violence for political ends. Its membership is drawn from across the community.

The Committee seeks to ensure the highest standards in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland by ensuring that the government complies with its responsibilities in international human rights law. The CAJ works closely with other domestic and international human rights groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights First (formerly the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights) and Human Rights Watch and makes regular submissions to a number of United Nations and European bodies established to protect human rights.

CAJ's activities include - publishing reports, conducting research, holding conferences, campaigning locally and internationally, individual casework and providing legal advice. Its areas of work are extensive and include policing, emergency laws and the criminal justice system, equality and advocacy for a Bill of Rights.

CAJ however would not be in a position to do any of this work, without the financial help of its funders, individual donors and charitable trusts (since CAJ does not take government funding). We would like to take this opportunity to thank Atlantic Philanthropies, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Hilda Mullen Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Oak Foundation and UNISON.

The organisation has been awarded several international human rights prizes, including the Reebok Human Rights Award and the Council of Europe Human Rights Prize.

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30<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Dear Peter,

***Re: Issues for next meeting of the Human Rights & Professional Standards Committee***

Thank you for the opportunity to submit issues for the next meeting of the Human Rights and Professional Standards Committee. The Committee on the Administration of Justice would like to raise the following matters:

1. **Stop and Search.** We have recently begun to examine allegations of harassment in F command area. A number of cases have been brought to our attention. Many involve the allegedly unwarranted use of stop and search powers or the exercise of those powers in ways designed to intimidate. Included amongst these allegations are stories concerning young men in GAA clothing regularly being harassed and those carrying hurley sticks going to GAA events being accused of carrying potentially offensive weapons. There has also been a number of incidents involving relatives of victims killed during the conflict where police are alleged to have made references to their bereavement. We intend to monitor this trend and will provide further information to the sub-committee at a later date. In the meantime we invite the committee to seek statistical information about numbers of complaints from the district and to monitor the incidence of stop and search there.

2. **Historical Inquiries Team:** We are concerned at continuing resources from this unit being used to investigate Operation Ballast. It has been reported that up to 25% of HET's budget is being used on this. While we understand the reasoning for asking this more independent unit to investigate these cases, we remain concerned that the work for which the HET was established – reviewing pre-1998 cases – is suffering. Reports indicate that the HET inquiry process is stuck at 1973. Given the passage of time and age of relatives of victims from those early years, it is important that the HET reviews continue with all speed. We invite the sub-committee to consider whether the Board should ask for a review of resources so that the HET's work can continue. I should emphasise that we are not saying that the investigation into Operation Ballast should be downscaled; rather that more resources are made available so that the HET work does not suffer.
  
3. Finally, we apologize for the brevity of our submission. However, we would point out that two weeks notice is rather a short turn-around period. In preparation for these meetings, we would urge the sub-committee to have regard to the limited resources available to NGOs, who have their own programme of work to undertake.

Should you wish to discuss these matters, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



Mike Ritchie, Director