

Just News

Human Rights in Northern Ireland

55 lawyers harassed by police

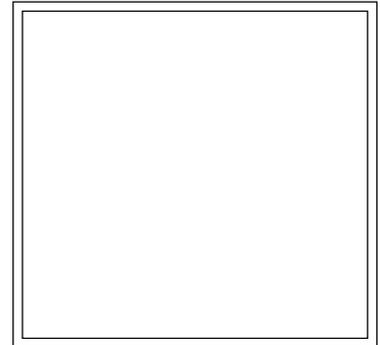
The Police Ombudsman's Office published their study into the treatment of solicitors and barristers by the police in Northern Ireland on the eve of Rosemary Nelson's fourth anniversary. The timing allowed commentators to reflect upon the risk that some barristers and solicitors run in pursuing their chosen profession, and the importance of taking all necessary steps to protect them against intimidation and harassment.

In the past, Northern Ireland has been almost entirely dependant for such scrutiny on international bodies. It is the sterling work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Dato Param Cumaraswamy, that used to keep the issue of the intimidation of lawyers in the public eye. His scathing commentaries on the failure of the authorities to protect defence lawyers were deeply embarrassing in international fora. Now, lessons have been learnt, and monitoring is being carried out by domestic bodies. Of course, the real test is what action will result from the Ombudsman's findings.

The findings themselves are very troubling. As the UN Rapporteur noted in his 1998 report - relatively few of the 2,834 solicitors and barristers in Northern Ireland routinely do work which brings them into conflict with the police: *"there was only a small number of lawyers who have been representing suspects or accused persons in politically sensitive cases. About 20 to 30 were actively involved and were largely solicitors. The very small number of barristers involved had no direct dealings with detainees or the RUC, hence they were not subject to this form of harassment"*. The Ombudsman's systematic survey of all solicitors and barristers indicated that the number of people experiencing problems was in fact much higher - *"55 members of the legal profession said they had experienced some harassment or threats from police officers, either personally or through their clients"*.

The survey found that more than half of the 55 respondents said that they had experienced 'three or more' incidents of intimidation, harassment or threats from the police. The most serious incidents were reported to have occurred on police premises and included defamation; direct physical threats or threats of arrest; accusations of belonging to terrorist organisations; threats by the police to pass on personal details to terrorist organisations; racist or sectarian abuse; unprofessional conduct; or police officers raising their voices or making inappropriate comments.

Surprisingly, though a survey question asked *when* the most serious incident had occurred, and whether a complaint had been made before or after 5 November 2000 (when the Ombudsman's office came into operation), the report says little about change over time.



Rosemary Nelson

The great majority of incidents occurred prior to the establishment of the Police Ombudsman's Office. Nearly 60% chose not to make a complaint but of those who did *"a high proportion were very dissatisfied with how seriously their complaints were taken"*. The Ombudsman expresses the belief that now *"there is a general expectation of improvement in the way complaints against the police are handled"* and appears to conclude on the basis of interviews with five of the lawyers reporting problems that *"there is no widespread or systemic police misconduct towards solicitors and lawyers taking place at the present time"*. It is fervently to be hoped that this is the case.

We cannot however agree with the assertion made by the Ombudsman that there is no evidence to suggest any police involvement in the murder of Pat Finucane. There is in fact considerable evidence of both police and army involvement.

Improvements in the treatment of solicitors, and respect for the important work they undertake in upholding the rule of law, will provide little consolation to Rosemary Nelson's family and friends. Nevertheless, anything that helps make the work, and ultimately, the lives of solicitors safer, is an important advance.

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PSNI launch new Code of Ethics

On 13 February 2003, the Northern Ireland Policing Board launched the Police Service of Northern Ireland's new Code of Ethics. The third recommendation of the Patten Commission, the independent commission set up to review policing in Northern Ireland, states, "A new Code of Ethics should replace the existing, largely procedural code, integrating European Convention on Human Rights into police practice. Codes of practice on all aspects of policing, including covert law enforcement techniques, should be strictly in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights." The purpose of the Code is to set standards for police conduct as well as police operations and make officers aware of their obligations under the European Convention.

Topics involved

The topics covered by the Code include:

- professional duty,
- police investigations,
- privacy and confidentiality,
- use of force,
- detained persons,
- equality,
- integrity,
- fitness for duty, and
- the duty of supervisors.

The Code governs the relationships of officers with the public, other professionals in the criminal justice system, their colleagues, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland as an organisation. It also requires officers to abstain from carrying out any order they know, or ought to know, is unlawful.

In addition to setting standards for police behaviour, the Code also serves as a set of disciplinary rules. The Secretary of State signed regulations incorporating the Code of Ethics into the police Conduct Regulations. After those regulations come into force, a violation of the Code of Ethics could lead to criminal or disciplinary action.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland drafted the Code and it was then submitted to the Policing Board for approval. CAJ had an opportunity to comment both to the police and the Board, and several of those comments, though not all, were incorporated into the final text.

The Code of Ethics is a very important initiative and is welcomed by CAJ. One important aspect of the Code is that it requires all officers to carry out their duties in accordance with the oath recommended by the Patten

Commission. The Patten Commission recommended that both serving and new officers take an oath to discharge their duties impartially and with respect for the human rights, traditions and beliefs of all individuals. The Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 fell short of Patten and required only new officers, not existing officers, to take the oath. The Code of Ethics now places a duty on all officers, whether they took the oath or not, to adhere to its principles while carrying out their duties.

Another positive aspect of the Code is that it requires supervisors to "challenge and address any behaviour in violation of this Code, reporting such where appropriate." The Code also protects officers who report that a violation of the Code has occurred or is about to occur. CAJ are concerned, however, with the limitations placed on this protection. The Code protects whistleblowers unless their report of a violation is shown to be "malicious or ill-founded." CAJ believe that the inclusion of the concept of "ill-founded" allegations, which was removed from the draft code and then reappeared in the final version, is problematic. Officers who report an activity which they reasonably believe is a breach of the Code, but which is later determined not to be a violation, may not be protected from penalisation.

We had also argued, unsuccessfully, that these provisions be made less passive. In Queensland, Australia, for example, there is legislation requiring whistleblowers to report suspicions of misconduct, rather than simply offering protection after the fact.

The effectiveness of the Code depends upon its implementation, which is something CAJ will be monitoring closely. Officers must be sufficiently trained on the Code and its practical implications for policing. CAJ has just been sent a copy of the Course for All training material, which addresses the Code, and we have some concerns as to the adequacy of this training. Unfortunately, it was not thought necessary to consult widely in advance on this material and thousands of officers and civilian staff have already completed the course. Even if the training were of the highest standards, more is needed.

Officers must be secure in their ability to report alleged violations without fear of reprisals. The Code will not be effective if reported violations are not fully investigated and if there are not serious consequences for those who are found to have breached the Code. An adequate system must be implemented to record officers' behaviour with respect to the Code of Ethics. Adherence to the Code should also be made part of the appraisal system that the Patten Commission recommended the PSNI use as part of their promotion process. The Policing Board, as part of their monitoring duty, must ensure that officers have adequate training and that appropriate systems are put into place to monitor and enforce compliance with the Code.

Bullets and spray here to stay?

In Patten's review of policing, he expressed surprise and concern that the authorities had "collectively failed to invest more time and money in a search for an acceptable alternative" to plastic bullets (para 9.14). Subsequently, in response to Patten's call for a research programme "to find an acceptable, effective and less potentially lethal alternative" and for a wider range of weapons, a Steering Group was established. (For CAJ's full response, see S. 142.)

CAJ's abiding concern about the work of the Steering Group is its lack of independent scientific or independent human rights expertise, which undermines the credibility of its findings. Moreover, while it explores - in extensive technical detail - options such as tasers, distraction/disorientation devices etc., its focus seems to be on weapons to complement not to replace plastic bullets. With regard to plastic bullets, comments from selected bodies such as the Police Ombudsman, the Independent Assessor of Military Complaints, and the Defence Scientific Advisory Council, are all repeated uncritically by way of evidence of "developments in transparency". In CAJ's response, we have drawn to the attention of the Steering Group, concerns that we and others have raised regarding the comments of all three bodies on plastic bullets. We have also notified the Steering Group - since no mention

is made of it in the 125-page report - that the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is the most recent UN body to argue for a ban on plastic bullets. It is not clear what consideration, if any, government has given to this UN recommendation.

Copies of our response to the Steering Group have been sent to the Chief Constable, the Policing Board and the Police Ombudsman and we used this opportunity to ask for further information about recent decisions relating to CS spray. Scientific articles available to CAJ suggest that the CS spray authorised for use here has 25 times as much irritant as its US equivalent and that there are such contradictory claims about the medical risks involved that The Lancet called for a moratorium on its use. Prior to authorising its purchase, it will be interesting to learn what searching questions the Policing Board asked of the Chief Constable. CAJ is also interested to learn from the Ombudsman on what authority (scientific and legal) she was relying when stating she was in favour of the police having CS spray.

Members of the new District Policing Partnerships being established across Northern Ireland will presumably be watching future developments with interest.

International Conference on Complaints against the Police Belfast, 5th - 7th November 2003

Call for Papers

Since the setting-up of the Police Ombudsman's Office in November 2000 there has been considerable local, national and international interest in its activities and progress.

The Office hopes to capitalise on this interest by hosting an international Conference on Complaints against the Police, to be held here in Belfast. It is hoped to attract between 150 and 250 delegates from a range of countries and interest groups (government, academics, police services, police authorities, etc.). The aim of the conference is to facilitate the exchange and analysis of information on systems dealing with complaints against the police with a view to improving knowledge bases in this area. Papers and workshop proposals relating to any aspect of the Conference theme are now invited. Papers and

workshops in the following areas would be particularly welcome:

- Human rights issues;
- Research on complaints and complainants;
- Practitioner issues;
- Police viewpoints;
- Restorative Justice and complaints;
- Police accountability and civilian oversight of policing

Proposals to be sent by 31 May 2003 to: **Dr. Malcolm Ostermeyer**, Head of Research, Police Ombudsman, New Cathedral Buildings, 11 Church Street, BELFAST BT1 1PG
m.ostermeyer@policeombudsman.org

Further information about the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland can be obtained from the Office's website www.policeombudsman.org

CAJ's latest submissions!

Race crime and sectarian crime legislation in Northern Ireland, February 2003, A4 format; £1.00 (Ref. S. 141)

Response to a research programme into alternative policing approaches towards the management of conflict (Patten recommendations 69 and 70 on public order equipment (known as the Steering Group on Plastic Bullets)), March 2003, A4 format; £2.00 (Ref. S. 142)

Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the above, should contact the CAJ office on 028 90961122.

More Vital Statistics

One of the most significant developments in relation to the promotion of equality over the last couple of decades has been the recognition of the importance of measuring the extent of disadvantage across various groups in society. Indeed, it is generally accepted that one of the successes of the 1989 Fair Employment Act was the introduction of compulsory monitoring of workforces by religion. A measure that at the time seemed to some quite controversial is now generally considered to have been an important step in measuring levels of representation in workforces across Northern Ireland. The basic principle of 'equality monitoring' is of course that unless one gathers information on the extent of the problem, formulating a solution is going to be somewhat hampered.

Indeed, it is worth recalling some of the recent and most egregious examples of under-representation. Most readers of Just News are probably familiar with the fact that at the time of the Patten Review the percentage of Catholics in the then RUC was 8%, and the percentage of women was 12%. Significantly however, the figures for the Senior Civil Service at the same time (ie the key decision-makers in relation to the governance of Northern Ireland) were 23% and 11%. In other words, in percentage terms there were more women in the old RUC than there were in the Senior Civil Service!

Admittedly there have been some improvements in the Senior Civil Service over the last couple of years, but the levels of representation for women and Catholics (not to mention say ethnic minorities, or people with a disability) is still well below that of the population as a whole. In the case of the police, Patten decided that the only way of trying to address the problems of Catholic under-representation was through the use of quotas (although the issue of gender under-representation seems to have gone relatively unnoticed). In relation to the Senior Civil Service, an external review was carried out under Lord (formerly Sir) Herman Ousley, although implementation of the recommendations is to be carried out in-house. Both these cases showed however that in the first instance, diagnosis of the extent of the levels of under-representation was only possible by examining the monitoring figures gathered by each organisation. Without such hard data, one is left only to surmise at the extent to which some groups might, or might not, be under-represented.

One of the problems with data gathering in the past however has been that it has generally restricted itself to religion and gender within employment. Thus, goods and services, and the 'other categories' have tended to be omitted. With the advent of Section 75 from the Northern Ireland Act that is changing. The Section 75 Guidelines, issued by the Equality Commission, with the approval of the Secretary of State, recognise the importance of data in relation to monitoring the extent to which policies and programmes, designed to promote equality of opportunity have been successful. Section 75 of course covers not just religion and gender but a range of other categories including race, disability, and dependants. Some of the data required for carrying out an equality impact assessment across the nine categories is actually currently available on existing databases.

For example, as a recent equality analysis of service users published by the Royal Trust reveals, most hospitals have records of the ages of all those who come through their doors, enabling the Royal to provide quite a detailed analysis of their patient profile, which showed for example that 27% of women were waiting over 12 months for admission to cardiac surgery compared with 17% of men. Equally potentially problematic is the fact that in relation to dentistry the number of children treated from the most deprived wards has fallen by 17% while the number from the least deprived areas increased by 25%. Clearly, the onus is on the Royal, and various interest groups to explore the reasons behind these differentials, and if necessary, remedial action to rectify the problem. Again however, without the data, these differentials would likely have gone unnoticed.

It is also worth noting that for the first time ever, the recent Northern Ireland census included questioning about racial/ethnic group. Indeed, in Britain, in the light of the Steven Lawrence Report, the police and criminal justice agencies have made more progress than their Section 75-designated counterparts in Northern Ireland with respect to gathering data. In a report published recently by the CRE in Britain on discrimination in the criminal justice system, it was revealed that people from ethnic minorities are over-represented at all stages of the criminal justice system and under-represented as employees of criminal justice services and agencies. Moreover, black people were found to be four times more likely to be arrested than white or other ethnic minority groups. Responding to the report, the Home Office announced that a new unit to look beneath the statistics, devise a programme of action and support the criminal justice system in meeting statutory responsibilities under the amended Race Relations Act. Unfortunately however, despite Section 75, and indeed an additional recommendation in the Criminal Justice Review figures for Northern Ireland are unavailable.

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In relation to monitoring across the Section 75 categories it is perhaps also worth noting that for some groups, monitoring will be easier than for others. Clearly, most employers and service providers will have data on at least the age of employees, for example. In other cases, it will be more problematic, not least those of political opinion and sexual orientation. In relation to the latter category, CAJ, has encouraged public bodies to liaise with organisations like the Coalition on Sexual Orientation in order to explore ways in which the various public bodies may be able to better promote equality on grounds of sexual orientation. In relation to the former category, CAJ has recommended that proxy measures, such as the use of postcodes be utilised in order to determine adverse impacts on particular groups who may be perceived by employers/service providers as having a particular political affiliation. In other words, are Catholics from areas such as BT7, BT9 afforded the same opportunity as those from BT12 and BT35? The value of such an analysis would also be particularly useful for providing a breakdown within the Protestant community. Latest figures from the census confirm what has been known for some time – namely that within the Protestant community there is a particular problem with respect to pockets of deprivation located within what would be considered generally to be affluent areas. Analysing ‘perceived political opinion’ in equality impact assessments via postcodes would also be useful in terms of linking the promotion of equality with targeting social need – something which the Royal Trust in their EQIA managed to do very well.

It is also worth noting that other rich sources of data exist beyond those outlined above. One of the best examples recently came from the General Consumer Council which published an excellent series of papers entitled ‘The Price of Being Poor’. Among the findings were that in Northern Ireland people living in deprived areas have higher death rates than those living in affluent areas. Men in the most affluent areas can expect to live on average 6-7 years longer than those in the most deprived areas, while women in the most affluent areas can expect to live around 4 years longer. In Northern Ireland the most affluent fifth of the population has a life expectancy among the best in Europe, while for the least affluent in society, life expectancy is more akin to that experienced in Eastern European Countries. It has also been estimated that around 2000 lives could be saved each year if people living in District Council areas with the highest death rates had the same health status as those living in areas with the lowest death rates. Those living in the most deprived areas have about 60-80% more heart and respiratory disease and strokes; suffer twice as many accidents and three times as much lung cancer. CAJ is currently working on an equality bulletin which will attempt to bring much of this data together – the challenge for politicians and policy-makers however is to ensure that the shocking levels of inequalities exemplified in these reports is rectified.

Hate Crimes

Government issued a consultative paper in November 2002 asking for advice about the best legislative response to race and sectarian hate crime.

CAJ prefaced its detailed response by arguing that a whole series of measures are needed to tackle the horror of hate crimes which appear to be on the rise in Northern Ireland. For example, government should consider the contribution to be made by – human rights education; measures to tackle institutional racism, sectarianism and homophobia; greater representation of under-represented groups in public bodies and in public service; greater political commitment to the section 75 equality and good relations duties; more research into hate crime; better victim support etc.

In terms of an explicit legislative response to hate crime, we argued that the experience of the Crime and Disorder Act in England (which introduced the crime of “racially aggravated” offences) would suggest that in Northern Ireland we should clearly distinguish between the alleged crime and the alleged motivation of the crime. Defendants should firstly be found innocent or guilty of the crime alleged; this would allow everyone to focus on the finding of fact. Subsequently, the sentence could reflect (as it does now) any mitigating or exacerbating elements, and the legislation should make it clear that a racist, sectarian or homophobic motivation should be considered as an exacerbating factor for sentencing purposes.

Of course, one may wonder whether crimes committed because of the hatred of the group that a victim is presumed to belong to are worse than crimes committed out of greed, or hatred of the individual concerned, or because of the perceived vulnerability of the victim (eg an elderly pensioner, or abused partner). CAJ argued that it was not a matter of saying what was ‘worse’, but of recognising that society should be able to show its abhorrence when people suffer simply on basis of their (real or perceived) skin colour, religion, political beliefs, or sexual orientation. In all these situations, the crime goes well beyond the individual who has been targeted, but has an impact on the wider group who the victim was thought to ‘represent’.

In addition, CAJ argued that a number of other legislative changes be made, and that particular thought be given to the issue of enforcement. Why has the current anti-hate crime legislation proved insufficient? Why do the police not record sectarian crimes? What needs to be done to help victims come forward? (Full submission, S.141, price £1.00)

Opportunity Knocks: *Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Bill, 2002*

In December 2002 the Irish Government published the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Bill, 2002 the principal purpose of which is to give effect in Irish law to the EU Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism and a number of international conventions on terrorism and the financing of terrorism.

It should be noted that subsequent to the atrocities of September 11th, 2001 the Irish Government pointed to the **Offences Against the State Acts 1939-1998** as evidence of a pre-existing elaborate legislative framework to counter terrorism. That legislation was subject to a thorough review (on foot of a commitment contained in the Belfast Agreement) by a government-appointed committee which reported in April 2002 (the so-called Hederman Report). As the Committee's terms of reference were drawn up prior to the events of September 11th 2001 its final report did not deal specifically with the issues arising therefrom.

Thus, the measures contained in the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Bill, 2002 should be seen as supplementing those contained in the Offences Against the State Acts, 1939-1998. The Bill also adapts the model of anti-organised crime legislation to the national and international counter-terrorist context by replicating provisions of the Criminal Justice Act, 1994 and the Proceeds of Crime Act, 1996.

The Bill is currently being debated in the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) and is unlikely to be subjected to significant amendment unless the government itself decides to amend the Bill as initiated.

Main provisions of the 2002 Bill

The key definitions are contained in Section 4 of the Bill. "Terrorist activity" is defined by reference to offences committed inside or outside the state with the intent of seriously intimidating a population, unduly compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, economic or social structures of a state or international organisation.

Section 6 deals with terrorist offences and makes it an offence to engage in such activities inside or outside the State; or to attempt or threaten to so engage. Sections 8-11 deal with the suppression of hostage-taking, terrorist bombing and crimes against internationally protected persons by giving effect to UN Conventions on each of these matters. Sections 12-44 deal with the suppression

of financing of terrorism by making provision for the measures necessary to enable ratification by Ireland of the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, 1999. A new and broadly defined offence of financing terrorism is created by Section 13.

Sections 14, 15 and 16 make provision for interim, interlocutory and disposal orders, respectively, that have the effect of freezing certain funds. These provisions make provision for the use of opinion evidence by a member of An Garda Síochána not below the rank of Chief Superintendent with the proviso that the High Court must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for that opinion. The section also stipulates that the standard of proof to be applied is that applicable to civil proceedings, i.e. the balance of probabilities.

Section 45 makes provision for extra-territorial jurisdiction in relation to certain offences. In other words, where such offences are committed outside the State proceedings can be taken anywhere in this State and may be treated as if the offence had been committed in this State. This is most likely to arise in situations where a request for extradition has been refused.

Commentary

Despite the real problems of transnational security post-9/11 there are issues of particular concern arising with regard to Ireland's legislative response. In passing the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Bill, 2002, Ireland will be adding to the permanent corpus of emergency-type legislation to deal with terrorism and organised crime represented by the Offences Against the State Acts, 1939-1998.

This body of legislation (and, in particular, its provision for a non-jury Special Criminal Court) has already been the subject of serious criticism, on a number of occasions, by the UN Human Rights Committee. While the existence of such legislation might be understandable by reference to the historical experience of political violence in Ireland, circumstances have changed significantly since the mid-1990's. It was in that spirit that the Irish Government undertook to review the Offences Against the State Acts in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

Although the resultant Hederman Report did not propose repeal or, indeed, fundamental reform of the Offences Against the State Acts some modest suggestions for improving the operation of the Acts were made. None of these have been acted upon and the measures contained in the 2002 Bill – which extend significantly certain provisions of the Offences Against the State Acts and other pieces of legislation – are open to criticism on a number of grounds.

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Forthcoming events!

Belfast Film Festival to host three major panel discussions during 20th - 28th March

Covering the Interface? - 21st March 2003

Panel chair: Claire Hackett,
Panelists: David Miller, Susan McKay and Tony Langlois
Venue: Exchange Place, 23 Donegall Street - 1.00pm
- 2.30pm

We Never Give Up - 25th March 2003

Panel chair: Mike Ritchie
Panelists: Shirley Gunn, Wilhelm Verwoerd and Mark
Thompson
Venue: An Culturlann, 216 Falls Road - 7.00 pm

Filming Women - 28th March 2003

Exchange Place, 23 Donegall St - 1.00 - 2.30pm
Seminar chair: Eilish Rooney
Panelists: Shawn Slovo, Lelia Doolan, Margo Harkin,
and Sarah Edge

All are free of charge

For further details contact Belfast Film Festival, Unit 18,
North Street Arcade, Belfast BT1 1PB Tel:028 9032
5913
Box office: 028 9032 5917 info@belfastfilmfestival.org

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The broad and all-encompassing definitions used in the Bill created an obvious danger in the new legislation. While the argument will be made that the judiciary will guard against this, such protection will be of minimal value as it arises *ex post facto*. Obvious concerns arise in relation to the treatment of anti-war / anti-globalisation activists or those engaged in forms of "direct action" that might not reasonably be considered to constitute terrorist activity.

The Bill is not being introduced as a temporary measure subject to future parliamentary review or renewal. This typifies the approach to such legislation in Ireland leaving the distinct impression that opportunism is what is driving this latest initiative. In the meantime, the government's response to the Hederman Report is awaited or, perhaps, this is their response.

Donncha O'Connell,
Lecturer in Law,
National University of Ireland, Galway.

Globalising Justice

The war on ~~terror~~ human rights
Amnesty International
12th April, Queen's University, Belfast

● Public meeting

Key speaker: Tariq Ali, author, broadcaster, anti-war campaigner

"The United States administration has decided quite openly and blatantly to use the events of September 11 to remap the world according to their own needs." "The war that the USA is waging in the name of terrorism is killing scores of innocent civilians and causing innumerable human miseries. The real solutions of the problems of Patetine and Iraq do not lie in military adventurism but in peaceful resolution that... ensures rights of people and their security."

Tariz Ali

Tickets: £4, £3 concession, available from 397 Ormeau Rd Tel: 028 9064 3000

● Fairer World Fair

Help make a fairer world - learn about new campaigns, find the latest books, buy the best fair trade products at the Fairer World fair. Stalls from local and international human rights, environmental, development and fair trade organisations.

Whitla Hall, Queen's University, Belfast
6.30pm - 7.30pm, Sat. 12th April

Free entry

● Respect refugees! Reject racism!

Amnesty International march
Give refugees a break and give racism the boot. Demonstrate the tolerant side of Northern Ireland. Join us at the front of Queen's University for a short but colourful parade.

Front of Queen's University,
2.30pm, Sat. 12th April

For further information on any of these events, please contact Amnesty International on 028 9064 3000

In the Headlines

CAJ holds newspaper clippings on more than 50
civil liberties and justice issues
(from mid 1987- December 2000).

Copies of these can be purchased from CAJ office.
The clippings are also available for consultation
at the office.

Civil Liberties Diary

Feb 1 A judicial review of the actions of both the police and the Police Ombudsman in relation to the investigation of the murder of solicitor Rosemary Nelson takes place in Belfast. The action was taken on behalf by CAJ to challenge the failure of both the police and Ombudsman to disclose documents relating to the investigation of the murder to enable a proper scrutiny of the effectiveness of the investigations.

Feb 3 The Human Rights Consortium, of which CAJ is a co-convenor held a conference at Stormont. The event formed part of the Consortium's efforts to secure a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights. The event was attended by a record 36 MLAs, activists from the almost 100 groups who make up the Consortium itself, and members of the Human Rights Commission.

Feb 5 A Coroner warned that he will probably require the police and army to provide him with classified documents and video recordings made in the week prior to the murder of Roseanne Mallon in 1994. The video recordings, many of which were only recently found to have existed, were filmed outside the pensioner's home in the period prior to her death.

Feb 6 The Policing Board has decided to give its endorsement to a police proposal to introduce CS spray.

Feb 7 The Chief Constable, Hugh Orde, criticizes the granting of bail to alleged paramilitaries and calls for a change in the law to reduce the number of those charged with this type of offence from being granted bail.

Feb 11 A leading English human rights barrister, Keir Starmer, QC has been appointed to act as advisor to the policing board on how to meet its human rights obligations under the Police (NI) Act 2000.

Feb 12 The Secretary of State, Paul Murphy, last night announced increased funding for the Human Rights Commission. The

Commission's budget has been increased from £750 000 to £1.35 million. The government say that the funding will enable the commission to take forward its vital work on the Bill of Rights and to build cross community support for that process. Chief Commissioner Brice Dickson said that the increase was essential to enable the Commission to carry out its work effectively.

The family of the murdered solicitor, Pat Finucane, met with retired Canadian Judge Peter Cory, on the 14th anniversary of the killing, to raise concerns about the continued delays to the establishment of an independent inquiry. Concerns were also raised about the openness of any inquiry which may eventually be held and its remit. Meanwhile the Stevens investigation announced that a file mentioning a senior British diplomat and many police and army officers was to be handed to the DPP.

Feb 13 The body which oversees the implementation of the policing reform process has been granted a two year extension. The current Oversight Commissioner, Tom Constantine, confirmed that he will continue in his role until December 2003 when his present Chief of Staff will take over

Feb 14 Women in Northern Ireland still earn substantially less than men, especially in the retail and IT industries. The research which was carried out on behalf of the equality commission also found that there was no sign of an improvement in the gender pay gap for women in part time work. The gender gap in the retail sector is especially significant, and is currently said to stand at 30%. It is one of the largest employers in the economy and is a major source of part time employment which is traditionally seen as being particularly important for working women.

A new policing code of ethics has been launched in Northern Ireland.

Feb 18 The Chief Constable, Hugh Orde, questioned whether the Bloody Sunday Inquiry would achieve some of its purposes. Mr Orde subsequently met some of the relatives of those killed and said that while he stood by what he had said he apologised for hurt caused by his remarks. He went on to suggest that some kind of truth process was needed to deal with past episodes of violence.

Feb 19 Jailed loyalist, Johnny Adair, failed in his Judicial Review to have the decision to re-arrest him and send him back to prison quashed.

Feb 21 Politicians clash over the significance to be attached to new employment figures released in the Labour Force Survey. These show that Catholics are roughly twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestants, with the unemployment rates being 8.3% to 4.3% respectively.

Feb 28 A newspaper leaked information on a report said to be being compiled by the Human Rights Commission into the use of plastic bullets. The report was "seriously hampered", according to the media coverage, by a lack of cooperation on the part of both the police and the Policing Board.

Compiled by Conor McCarthy from various newspaper sources.



Just News welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

Just News is published by the Committee on the Administration of Justice Ltd.

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The views expressed in Just News are not necessarily those of CAJ.