

Just News

Human Rights in Northern Ireland

CAJ Annual General Meeting

CAJ held its Annual General Meeting on 25th October. A large gathering of members were present to conduct the formal business, and were then treated to a stimulating presentation from Imran Khan.

The outgoing chairperson Kieran McEvoy presented his report as chair highlighting the hard work of the CAJ over the years and commending the staff for their dedication and commitment.

He noted that the recent loyalist riots show that work still needs to be done in Northern Ireland and questions why measures that would bring people together, for example a Bill of Rights, have not yet been implemented. Incoming chair Fiona Doherty then took over proceedings and thanked Kieran for his work over the past 2 years and noted that he would remain on the executive to share his expertise.

A presentation was then made by the auditor, which showed CAJ had balanced the books almost exactly! It was agreed to maintain the membership fees and also to retain the auditor.

The following executive committee was elected:

Chair: Fiona Doherty
 Vice Chair: Kieran McEvoy
 Treasurer: Les Allamby
 Membership Secretary: Fiona McCausland
 Parliamentary Liaison Officer: Paddy Hillyard
 Just News Editor: Fionnuala Ni Aolain

CAJ were then presented with an Angel of Justice sculpture (see picture overleaf) by Rob Fairmichael as a tribute to the staff, committee and executive. Our thanks to him for this beautiful piece.

In defense of liberties

Our invited guest this year was Imran Khan the solicitor who represented Stephen Lawrence's family and works

with the British Muslim community in England. He spoke on the effect the new anti-terrorist measures will have on young Muslims in Britain today, and on the important part people from Northern Ireland can play in helping prevent the problem from escalating.



Imran began by acknowledging the work of CAJ over the past 25 years and remarking how rejuvenating it is to meet others working hard on human rights so one feels less alone in this monumental task. He then reinforced the importance of this work by giving a shocking example of how wide ranging the new anti-terrorist measures will be, recounting that he was stopped recently at US immigration because he matched two criteria: he

was of Pakistan descent and had a British passport, and his surname matched one of the suicide bombers. 64 000 people in the UK fit this criteria and it is on the bases of these superficial reasons people are being stopped and questioned.

The new anti-terrorist legislation is designed to protect the "nation" against attack. However Imran explained that this

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idea of a nation is not the same for everyone in Britain. Parts of the British Muslim community view themselves as belonging to a nation that is not restricted by the country's borders.

He discussed how many people believe that the oppressive governments in the Middle East, which were pro-US have led to a rise in Islamic militancy, as people were forced to turn to the mosques for support and guidance. In these countries the US sponsored the dictators suppressing the country, so people began to see the US as the enemy. Many people in the Middle east experience great hardships and may not have employment or basic resources. This



The Angel of Justice

makes them direct targets for preachers in mosques who explain the problems they face are due to the Western influence in the countries. In addition modern technology people have been able to witness the extremes of poverty and wealth facing each other. These and other factors have developed into the west being perceived as the enemy.

Imran explained how the new legislation would have the effect of enabling a whole community to be criminalized and he explained how this may lead to the Muslim community being in a similar situation to the Irish at a previous time. It will lead to every devout Muslim being perceived as an Islamic fundamentalist. He asked on what grounds the state should criminalize its citizens? The proposed new legislation with three months detention would effectively be internment, although he questioned whether this would be universally applied in Britain, or would specifically affect foreigners and asylum seekers. He highlighted that already in Britain since 9/11 the numbers of Asians being stopped and searched by police has increased by 300%. The consequence of all this will simply be to drive a wedge between the Muslim community and other communities in Britain.

The new terrorism measures will have the additional effect of spreading fear in the refugee community because it covers any perceived acts of terrorism against any country worldwide. This means that supporters of democracy,

who flee their country through fear of the dictators' regime and then come to Britain as refugees, can potentially be arrested as terrorists if they speak out against the dictatorship. A press release by Home Secretary Charles Clarke reinforced that public safety always comes first so that it would be justifiable to arrest where there is no notion of intent. This will mean that by simply expressing an opinion as to what is occurring in the world one could actually be caught up in the legislation.

Imran then looked to possible solutions for this situation. He discussed the idea that integration is seen by many as the way forward, but noted that Muslims are determined not to integrate and want to stay inside their own communities. He reinforced the believe that integration is a two way process along with assimilation. However, Muslims who reach out to other communities are often treated with racism or distrust. In Britain today there is very little future for young Muslims and they do not find support through the community in Britain. It is as a result of this that they flock to mosques searching for guidance and respect, which they have not found in the secular world.

Imran perceived that the lessons learnt from Ireland would be very useful in this climate of fear in England and he sees the role that people from Northern Ireland could have as being twofold: they could speak out against the anti-terrorist

measures and remind people in the rest of the UK that these policies didn't work here and enforce the point that new ideas should be considered. He also suggested that the Irish community should speak to the Muslim community, to highlight that they have experienced the same fear, and that people need to speak out against it.

This thought provoking presentation gave rise to many questions. Imran acknowledged that there is an incredible task ahead and it is certainly a challenge for us to work with the Muslim community and the government in the hope that an entire generation of British Muslims don't share the same fate as the Irish community experienced for so long. It is important that we in Northern Ireland share our knowledge and experience with people who are unaware of the Irish example. The government need to be given a solution that won't cause them to be seen as being "soft" on terrorism, and the Muslim community need to feel as though they are part of the British community and haven't been rejected by it. We in Northern Ireland have experienced a divided community for a long time and we know the awful reality of the situation. Let us respond to Imran's challenge and share our stories in the hope that the situation can improve over the next few years.

Julie Crutchley
CAJ volunteer

14+28+90=28

On 9 November, a 31-strong majority of the House of Commons voted down the government's proposal to allow police to detain terrorism suspects for 90 days without charge. The vote, in which 49 Labour MPs broke ranks with their party, marked the government's first parliamentary defeat since coming to power. Nonetheless, the amended text, to be considered by the House of Lords from 21 November, doubles the current limit on pre-charge detention to 28 days and contains numerous other provisions that could be used to undermine fundamental freedoms.

90 days: the equivalent of a 6-month sentence

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) called for the extension of pre-charge detention to 90 days shortly after the July attacks in London, claiming that police needed more time to gather and analyse evidence in terrorism cases. Currently, terror suspects may be held for 14 days, and regular criminal suspects for four days, without charge; if at that time there is insufficient evidence for a formal charge, they must be released. The government included the proposal in its Terrorism Bill 2005, published in September.

Critics pointed out that 90 days' detention is equivalent to the average time served during a six-month prison sentence. They argued that holding someone for so long, in the absence not just of a trial but of the certainty of grounds for any criminal charges at all, would contravene internationally-recognised human rights standards. Important rights are at issue here, such as the right to a fair trial and to protection against arbitrary detention, the right of an arrested person to be promptly informed of the charges against him or her, and the presumption of innocence.

Other opponents cited past experience of emergency legislation as evidence for concerns about the potential for violations of the right to protection against self-incrimination. They noted that the longer an individual is held in custody without charge, the more coercive the situation and the less likely it is that any statements he or she makes can be judged to have been made voluntarily.

Still other criticisms centred on the impact that violating basic rights would have on the communities affected. It was argued that the measure could ultimately increase threats to security by further alienating many in Muslim communities, severely damaging race and inter-faith relations and counteracting efforts towards greater

communication, openness and mutual respect between members of different traditions.

Potential for violations of fundamental freedoms

Other aspects of the Terrorism Bill were equally worrying. Unlike existing criminal law, which stipulates for example that a perpetrator must have the intention of inciting violence for his or her behaviour to constitute a punishable offence of incitement, 'encouragement of terrorism' was to be criminalised regardless of whether the individual in question could be shown to have intended for terrorist offences to be carried out in consequence of his or her statements. Instead, the test for judging whether a given statement constituted a crime was whether members of the public could reasonably be expected to understand it to encourage terrorism.

Critics expressed concern that the broad language and the omission of the element of intent could allow the provisions to be loosely or subjectively applied, potentially leading to arbitrary detention. Similarly, it was feared that related measures criminalising any statement which 'glorifies the commission or preparation (whether in the past, future or generally)' of terrorist acts could be used to violate the right to peaceful expression, with legitimate expressions of support for self-determination struggles or other political views misinterpreted and punished as glorifying terrorism.

In a bid to allay some of these fears the government asked Lord Carlile, its anti-terrorism law expert, to review the definition of terrorism over the next year. It also amended some of the Bill's language, for instance introducing the concept of 'reckless intent' to the 'glorification' charge. The text before the House of Lords remains deeply worrying, however, and those in Northern Ireland and elsewhere who are concerned with human rights and civil liberties will closely follow developments.

Claims of politicisation of the police

Opposition politicians and others expressed dismay at the degree of involvement of ACPO in lobbying MPs to vote with the government. Many felt that the way in which the matter was handled has hindered anti-terrorism efforts by calling into question the political impartiality of the police service and by giving the image of a government more intent on expanding the law to suit the police rather than on ensuring that the police act within the law.

As highlighted in a previous edition, NI has much experience to share on the operation of this type of legislation and we need to ensure that this experience is brought to bear.

Paige Jennings

Human Rights in the Community

An interesting publication of the British Institute of Human Rights engages with the challenge of creating a human rights culture. It addresses the need to make human rights count in practice and looks at a range of topics such as the rights of older people, human rights education, the impact of the Human Rights Act on mental health care, children's human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity and religious discrimination. One of the articles focuses particularly on the extent to which socio-economic rights can be an agent for change and, given the topicality of this issue for other conferences, events and discussions underway currently, a highly-edited version is included here.

Rights can never be 'given'. Rights inhere to us by virtue of our very humanity, so slaves in ancient Rome, Jews under the Nazis, and women under the Taliban, all possessed rights, even if those rights were abused egregiously. Part of the modern debate about rights has been an exploration of how to ensure that these rights, deriving from our very humanity, are more respected than they have been in previous generations

In Europe, we can be grateful to the struggles of the ancient Greeks and Romans in beginning to give meaning to concepts of democracy, the rights of citizenship, and the risk posed by absolute power. In Britain, the early assertion of rights in the form of the Magna Carta (albeit the rights of the aristocracy in relation to the king) secured fundamental protections such as habeas corpus that are still enjoyed nowadays. A few hundred years later, the English Bill of Rights of 1689, followed thereafter by the American and French revolutionary struggles, dramatically changed society's power relationships, and imposed certain duties on those in authority to respect basic civil and political liberties. Of course, this growing consciousness of human rights was both slow and far from universal – slaves, women in general, and many others throughout the generations were denied their human dignity.

Clearly, however, certain economic, social and cultural rights are not nearly as well established, either in law or even in human rights discourse. There are many fundamental reasons for this. Of most immediate historical relevance was the Cold War. Whereas, in 1948, the UN agreed on the indivisibility and inter-dependence of rights, as encapsulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by the mid 1960s the world had changed, and the

elaboration of two distinct Covenants - one emphasising the importance of civil and political rights and actively promoted by the 'west', and the other emphasising the importance of economic, social and cultural rights, and actively promoted by the then Soviet Union - conveyed a very different message. The discourse of rights itself was used as a weapon in the political posturing, and this legacy of Cold War rhetoric has greatly hobbled the debate of social and economic rights ever since.

Yet the article argues that it is the promotion and protection of socio-economic rights (alongside, not instead of civil and political rights) that can prove a particularly effective force for change in our society.

1. The very fact that economic, social and cultural rights are the 'poor relation' in human rights discourse can be turned to advantage by those working for change. Educational efforts, campaigning, advocacy and organising to change this reality can, in and of itself, empower those who will most benefit from a wider respect of social and economic rights.
2. Economic, social and cultural rights are likely to be particularly important in terms of the sheer numbers of people affected. Not everyone comes into contact with the criminal justice system, but everyone needs nourishment, an adequate standard of living, a roof over one's head, and basic education and health services.
3. Traditional human rights discourse is often characterised as being overly legalistic, given its emphasis on certain kinds of rights. Human rights campaigns against homelessness, or for good healthcare and for good educational provision, are likely to attract not only more people, but a much more diverse constituency of interest.
4. The protection of economic, social and cultural rights requires positive, pro-active measures on the part of government, and sometimes the deployment of major resources. As such, debates about how best to protect economic, social and cultural rights often require and/or elicit broader society-wide debates.
5. Economic, social and cultural rights, for the most part, require expression in common. Whereas civil and political rights often focus on the inherent dignity of the individual and an individual's right to be different, economic, social and cultural rights complement this approach by celebrating people's common humanity and their inherently social nature.

Perhaps most importantly, the experience in other jurisdictions suggests that the assertion of socio-

ty: Rights as Agents for Change

economic rights empowers the rights' bearers themselves to become agents of their own change.

But how does this all relate to discussions underway in Northern Ireland? Few would doubt that, while the conflict cannot be simplified to issues of poverty and social exclusion, these problems fed and fuelled the conflict, and that it is necessary to address these issues to bring about a more just and peaceful society. Accordingly, in Northern Ireland one can find a range of initiatives that both seek to secure socio-economic rights in practice, and which seek to use the process of securing of these rights to empower people to act as the agents (not recipients) of change.

Thus, one of the building blocks in the Agreement was the commitment to a society which, not only countered discrimination, but actively promoted equality for all. A broad alliance of groups, working to promote equality on grounds of political and religious opinion, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability, had lobbied hard to ensure that such a commitment would be part of the political negotiations, and would be translated into legislation. The subsequent equality duty (often called the Section 75 duty), if fully implemented, should result in greater equality of opportunity for all within society and creates a new kind of policy-making that relies upon a more participative democratic approach.

Another area of alliance building has been in the work undertaken around a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The Human Rights Consortium came into being to lobby for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and has, both by its very existence, and in its work, been effective in highlighting how rights can affect change. Its breadth of membership indicates that rights belong to no one group in society. In a deeply divided society like Northern Ireland, the existence of the Consortium confirms that rights transcend political and community divisions and focuses the debate on people's common humanity. It is noteworthy that – at least in Northern Ireland - it is the agenda of socio-economic rights that has proved particularly effective in creating a cohesive and shared agenda. Whereas civil and political rights (issues such as policing, emergency laws, and prisoners) have often been the source of much division between the two major traditions, many unionists and nationalists can find common cause around issues of poverty, housing, health, and other socio-economic rights.

A third quite different but innovative and creative approach to the promotion of socio-economic rights is arguably to be found in the principles underlying government's programme to Target Social Need (i.e. skew resources to those most in need). Unfortunately, the operationalisation of this measure is far from satisfactory, and few of the intended beneficiaries of the New Targeting Social Need (TSN)

programme would recognise it as addressing the need for change. The reasons for the failure of New TSN to deliver on the ground are complex but the failure might be due, in part at least, to the fact that the TSN programme was rarely if ever seen or presented by government as a question of human rights. Despite the substantive rights content – TSN after all was intended to tackle social exclusion and poverty - it had no explicit rights language or construct. Moreover, the TSN programme is a centrally directed, top-down, measure: it has not sought to involve the intended beneficiaries in determining how to operate most effectively. TSN, and New TSN, were both said to be intended to effect change, yet then ensured that the supposed agents for change remained the central policy makers who had consistently failed to secure any substantial change in the preceding decades.

The chapter argues that it is vital that the most marginalised in society be involved in becoming agents of their own change. Rights cannot be an occasional preoccupation of government (at best), but instead the promotion of rights must be a central tenet and purpose of governance. Governments can have very different political, economic, legal, social and other policies, but they cannot pursue these policies at the expense of people's basic rights. Moreover, the intended beneficiaries of a programme targeting exclusion and poverty need to be party to translating the principles of rights into practical effect, in determining what the criteria for success and failure will be, and in contributing to the monitoring of the extent to which those criteria are met in reality.

Northern Ireland's discussion of the role of socio-economic rights in a Bill of Rights is important in and of itself but it might also contribute to such debates in Britain and in the Republic. More generally, a debate about socio-economic rights would contribute to the intellectual debate around modern issues of governance. Representative democracy served society relatively well in the 19th and 20th centuries, but is it enough for the 21st? Has the unintended political vacuum of Northern Ireland allowed for experiments that should no longer be seen as 'second best' but as mechanisms that can usefully complement the more traditional forms of political engagement? If this were to occur, social and economic rights would truly serve as radical agents for societal change.

This article is taken from a chapter written by Maggie Beirne in "Human Rights in the Community - Rights as agents for change" edited by Colin Harvey, 2005, Hart Publishing

Migrant Workers – who are they and what are they doing here?

“Partnership” is a much used and much maligned term – it seems that there are a plethora of various partnerships in one form or another operating across Northern Ireland. One success story however is the ANIMATE project, a partnership between NGOs and public bodies in the mid-Ulster area that has been working to raise awareness around the problems facing the mid-Ulster migrant worker community.

One of the difficulties in this field is establishing the correct terminology. A lay definition of a migrant worker is “a person travelling to a country they are not a national of for the primary purpose of work”. Effectively, migrant workers are persons who travel to another country for work. The European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers states that a “migrant worker” shall mean a national of a contracting party who has been authorised by another contracting party to reside in its territory in order to take up paid employment.

Migrant worker is therefore a technical term and not an offensive term. The term can only be offensive if it is misapplied to a person who is not a migrant worker, for example a member of the Chinese or other black or minority ethnic community born locally who is not a migrant worker. Migrant worker is therefore distinct from a refugee, who in lay terms is a person seeking sanctuary from persecution. “Asylum seeker” is a term used by governments to indicate someone has applied for refugee status and they are still waiting for a decision.

There is however a fair amount of problematic terminology in relation to this issue. For example, “illegal immigrant” is highly problematic, as the use of the term stigmatizes and criminalises a person, who is not a criminal but is often doing nothing more than wanting to work, normally a commended value when applied to the majority population.

The term “illegal immigrant” is also technically incorrect and is often misused as a stigmatising label. No one can be an “illegal immigrant” or themselves be “illegal”. Whilst someone can be conducting an act that breaches immigration rules or working without authorisation, this does not make the actual person themselves “illegal”. Article 6 of the UN Declaration states “Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law”.

A preferable term for someone working without authorisation to do so is an “unauthorised worker”, the terms undocumented worker and irregular worker have also been used. Also, many workers who do have the right to work are denied that entitlement through poor advice and information; being misled by exploitative rogue employers/agents and delays, mistakes and arbitrary decisions by the Immigration Service.

On the subject of terminology, it should also be noted that the term “ethnic communities” is also misleading in that it

refers to everyone rather than any specific group. There are minority ethnic groups, but also majority communities are majority ethnic groups. Other terms that should be avoided include “the Portugese” as this collective term does not capture the range of national identities there are within the Portugese and Tetum speaking migrant worker population (a more accurate term in the local area).

It is also worth noting that common clichés regarding “migrant” workers taking other people’s jobs are not only wrong in terms of equality of opportunity and migrant workers having the right to work here, but are also wrong in the context of the actual economic impact of the migrant workers on the economy. ANIMATE has frequently highlighted the case of the local food processing industry (the largest manufacturing industry) which is now dependent on migrant labour. If there were no migrant workers available, these industries would not have enough staff and may well relocate overseas devastating the local economy. The jobs in the factory would go, as would jobs in agriculture who supply the factory with produce, along with losing all of the additional tax revenues and additional money spent by migrant workers in local shops and services. Clearly, far from “taking” jobs, migrant workers are retaining and creating a wide variety of jobs.

There is a danger in reducing migrant workers to economic commodities rather than people by focusing on economic impact. However it is clearly necessary to do so when popular discourse demonising migrant workers is based on false economic assertions.

ANIMATE have also recently published a study on the “Racial attitudes and prejudice towards migrant workers – A survey of staff in statutory agencies in the Cookstown, Dungannon and Craigavon Areas”. This report, which is available on the ANIMATE website, shows that there is considerable cause for concern regarding the attitudes within public bodies towards migrant workers. The report does however include a number of recommendations that should be taken on board, particularly in light of the five year review of equality schemes. There is now an ideal opportunity for all public bodies to examine how they interact with the migrant worker communities across Northern Ireland.

Just as Northern Ireland is changing in terms of the make-up of its workforce, it is vital that those involved in administering Northern Ireland, and indeed those arguing for greater equality in NI, are aware of this changed landscape. ANIMATE are making an important contribution in this regard.

For more information about ANIMATE see website: www.animate-ccd.net

Ardoyne: The Untold Truth

The book *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth* written by the Ardoyne Commemoration Project is, on its face, simply and straightforwardly the story of the death of ninety-nine ordinary people during the ‘Troubles’, all coming from the small working class nationalist neighborhood Ardoyne. Yet, the specific circumstances surrounding each death, and the shifting political and historical time frames that make up the conflict are neither simple nor straightforward. By examining the individual stories of ninety-nine victims of the conflict, as told by the families, friends, and eye-witnesses of those killed, *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth* uses a unique narrative in its story of the Troubles that is poignant, powerful, and effective.

The book primarily consists of the individual stories of each of the ninety-nine deaths in Ardoyne as told by family, friends, and witnesses. The goal of the book is to give individual attention to these anonymous victims, give the victims’ families a chance to tell their stories from their own perspective, and to document an accurate history from the perspective of those whose stories and voices are rarely heard. The book succeeds in accomplishing all of these tasks, and in doing so, is also able to paint a picture of the shifting yet omnipresent turbulence, struggles, oppression, and violence faced in the daily lives of working class nationalists throughout the Troubles.

The book is structured by breaking up the conflict into six phases, each of which makes up a chapter. Each of the six chapters begins with a historical context section that clearly and effectively highlights the distinct phase of the conflict by describing how events developed within Ardoyne and elsewhere during that specific time frame. This is then followed by the individual cases of each of the Ardoyne victims who died during that time period. The individual case sections make up the bulk of the book and include a photo, key biographical details, and testimonies of relatives, friends, and witnesses. The stories of those victims include nationalists and non-nationalists, civilians and combatants, men and women, young and old. Those responsible for deaths include the RUC, British army, Loyalist paramilitaries and Irish Republicans. Thus, the variety of victims and the assortment of perpetrators mirrors that of the entire conflict and reflects Ardoyne as

a microcosm for the nationalist community in all of Northern Ireland.

The diversity in both victims and perpetrators is important in achieving an inclusiveness of victims and a comprehensive historical record. More importantly, it allows for an alternative to the potential problem of creating a ‘hierarchy of victims’ between and within particular communities. It eliminates the distinction between ‘innocent’ and ‘non-innocent’ victims, in favor of an approach that embraces all victims of the conflict as just that—victims. This is easily illustrated by examining a couple of these stories: Bernard Fox was 16 years old and on active service for Fianna Eireann when he was shot dead by the British army. Bernard’s story is directly followed by the story of Hugh Martin. Hugh Martin served in the British army and was a POW during World War II. After the war he worked for 20 years as a baker until he was murdered by UVF gunman in a sectarian attack, he was 56 years old. Placing two victims with such different lives, deaths, and stories gives respect to the victim’s memory, the victim’s families, and gives the reader a sense of the totality and extensiveness of the conflict on the entire community.

This is not a fun book to read; it is quite long—542 pages—and at times is quite tedious and depressing reading. Further, it is difficult to digest the stories of lives cut short needlessly and placing identities, names, and faces to the many that died is heart-wrenching. But that does not take away from the accomplishments of the book. The book has achieved its extraordinarily important goal of deconstructing the anonymity of each individual victim that is inherent in a conflict with so many casualties, it has empowered victims by allowing them to ‘tell their story’, and it has successfully documented an accurate history from the perspective of those coming from the lower rungs of society and whose voices are rarely heard. The fact that the book effectively tells a history of the conflict—utilizing the neighborhood of Ardoyne as a mirror or microcosm of the conflict—in a unique narrative is an additional achievement. While *Ardoyne: The Untold Story* is certainly not light reading, it serves an important historical document in both what it accomplishes for the victims and their families, as well as serving as a detailed historical account of the Troubles for the reader.

Richard Shore
CAJ Intern from the University of Seattle, USA

Civil Liberties Diary

October 4 A rise in the number of female prisoners has led to calls for a new women's jail to be built and better measures to protect their welfare by the Independent Monitoring Boards.

October 5 The NI Human Rights Commission has welcomed a High Court ruling criticising the detention of a young person in the Intensive Support Unit (ISU) at Rathgael Juvenile Justice Centre. The Court found that the six-month duration of "enhanced supervision" of the young person interfered with his rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

October 6 A range of official government statistics have been brought together which show that Catholics in Northern Ireland are more likely to be socially and economically deprived, with significantly lower levels of investment and job creation in Catholic districts. Catholics are also more likely to be excluded from policy and decision-making positions within senior levels of the civil service, local government institutions and key public authorities.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has ruled that the denial of the right to vote of 48,000 sentenced prisoners in Britain amounted to an abuse of the right to free elections. The judges ruled that voting was a right, not a privilege.

October 10 The Anti-racism Network has said that it was irresponsible of the police not to classify as racially motivated an attack on the house of eastern European workers in Ballymena.

October 11 The Police Ombudsman has been asked to investigate the 1997 murder of Presbyterian minister, David Templeton, following a beating by members of the UVF. It is thought he was targeted because he was gay. He gave the names of his assailants to the RUC but no action was taken.

October 13 The government's plans to detain terror suspects for 90 days without charge could be struck down by the courts as a breach of human rights warned Lord Carlile, the government appointed watchdog of anti-terror legislation.

A major shake-up of the Policing Board was unveiled by the Secretary of State, which included increasing the number of seats for the DUP to reflect their electoral success. The UUP expressed unhappiness at the proposals.

October 14 A new survey has called into question the theory that Protestants do not get their fair share of European money. A report carried out by Price Waterhouse Coopers for the Special European Union Programmes Body showed that 57% of money granted by the European Union went to Protestant groups.

October 17 A coalition of 14 legal, human rights and anti torture organisations (including CAJ) have intervened in a House of Lords appeal on the ruling that evidence obtained through torture abroad is admissible in British courts.

October 18 The government has announced that it is to establish a high level delivery team to address the needs of disadvantaged loyalist communities. The team will include senior officials from the Northern Ireland Departments and Northern Ireland Office.

October 19 The NI Human Rights Commission is to investigate the case of Patricia McPeake who will not be given the potentially life saving drug, herceptin, despite passing a suitability test. Diagnosed with breast cancer, she may now have to pay £25,000.

October 24 New guidelines defining the role Community Restorative Justice Schemes are to be published. David Hanson

made assurances that the schemes are not going to undermine current law making and policing operations.

The Secretary of State announced the appointment of Mrs Bertha McDougall as Interim Commissioner for Victims and Survivors of the Troubles. The Interim Commissioner would look at key areas relating to services for victims, funding arrangements in relation to services and grants paid to victims and survivors groups and individual victims and survivors. The Interim Commissioner would also look at how a Victims and Survivors Forum might be established to provide a focus for discussion for issues affecting those who have suffered. Concerns have been raised about the method of appointment of the Commissioner.

October 25 Criminal Justice Minister David Hanson launched the 'Probation Board for Northern Ireland Victim Information Scheme' which will provide key information to victims about offenders who are subject to supervision by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

Chief Commissioner of the NI Human Rights Commission, Monica McWilliams, has said that equal numbers of inquiries come to the Commission each year from the unionist and nationalist communities.

Compiled by Mark Bassett from various newspapers.



Just News welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

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