

The year ahead at the UN

It has been the experience of CAJ that the various UN treaty monitoring bodies have played an extremely important role in ensuring the compliance of the United Kingdom government with its international human rights obligations. This was particularly true in times when domestic pressure was difficult to assert or easily ignored with the focus on dealing with the violent conflict. Interventions during that period by the UN Committee Against Torture led to a reduction in allegations of psychological abuse, and pressure asserted via the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination led to the long overdue extension of race relations legislation to Northern Ireland.

CAJ is therefore a strong advocate of NGOs using the UN system to raise concerns with the domestic implementation of human rights. In the past we have facilitated many groups in submitting alternative papers to the government's official report. We have heard from many Committee members that such submissions are invaluable, providing as they do an "on the ground" analysis of the extent to which the human rights protections contained in the various UN Conventions are respected (or not) in practice.

Admittedly the UN system is not perfect – the gap and delay between reports can run to five or six years or more. These delays mean the Committees are examining reports that are significantly out of date by the time of the examination. When the Committees meet – which occurs only a handful of times a year – they have many countries and thus endless amounts of material to deal with in one session. It could be argued that this prevents them from examining reports in detail and thus missing key issues.

However, the system is very keen to hear from sources outside government, and as such welcome submissions from NGOs. As highlighted in the later article by British Irish Rights Watch on the process of making a submission, these should be brief and ideally point to some key questions that the Committee might like to ask. Many Committees have now also introduced an NGO briefing session which allows them to receive oral presentations on key issues of concern from NGOs.

The output of the process of examination is a set of Concluding Observations, which highlight areas of concern to the Committee as well as recommendations for action by government. After expending so much energy lobbying Committees, this is very often where NGOs lose momentum, whereas arguably this is where most energy should be focussed. Government can be very slow to circulate or make widely available these recommendations, despite being told by the Committee to do so. Clearly, however, there is little value in NGOs lobbying a Committee if they do not then use any recommendations to good effect in both publicity and policy terms.

The UK government has submitted or is quite soon due to submit a number of reports, namely:

- The report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was submitted in November 2006
- The report under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) is due to be submitted on 30th June 2007
- The report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) was due in April 2006
- The report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is due in July 2007
- The report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is due to be submitted this month

Many opportunities therefore exist in the near future for using the UN system to raise concerns about, and ensure the implementation of, the government's domestic implementation of its human rights obligations.

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| The year ahead at the UN | 1 |
| CAJ: Past and Future | 2 |
| Parading - more of the same? | 3 |
| A Practical Guide to the United Nations' Committees | 4/5 |
| Northern Ireland on the agenda in New York and New Delhi | 6 |
| "The prison system failed Roseanne" | 7 |
| Civil Liberties Diary | 8 |

CAJ: Past and Future

Sarah Cooke previously of the British Institute of Human Rights and Steven Burkeman formerly of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Foundation, were asked by CAJ's executive to carry out an evaluation of the organisation. A brief note on their findings follows.

Our evaluation of CAJ, which resulted in an 84 page report, followed a major 4-year grant from Atlantic Philanthropies and focused on the period of that grant (2003-2006 inclusive). The process involved interviews with 55 key stakeholders, including CAJ staff and Executive members, various members of the Human Rights Consortium and the Equality Coalition, representatives of statutory bodies, academics, and politicians.

We looked at CAJ's work on policing, criminal justice, the protection of rights and equality, as well as issues relating to the organisation's profile, presentation and positioning; organisational development; membership; and funding (though the last area will be the subject of a separate piece of work). We then used the outcomes of the evaluation to inform a strategic planning process, including putting together the first draft of a strategic plan, in which CAJ staff and Executive members were involved, looking at the overall strategic direction of CAJ for the next three years.

With CAJ's active encouragement, we interviewed not only those who might be thought to be amongst the organisation's natural supporters, but also some who would definitely not be – it is important for CAJ to speak to and to be seen to speak to, those who do not always agree with it, and where possible, to persuade them of its case. The context for the evaluation and strategic planning was, inevitably, Northern Ireland as a society in transition from conflict to something approaching normality – and the extent to which CAJ is also making that transition in the work it chooses to do, and the way in which it does it.

What emerged out from this process was real clarity about CAJ's *mission and vision* for at least the next three years. It sees itself as 'an independent non governmental organisation working, since 1981, to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights of all those in Northern Ireland by reference to internationally agreed human rights standards'. It believes its current areas of focus on

policing, criminal justice, protection of rights and equality continue to be the right ones, with a crucial role in monitoring the 'new institutions' as Northern Ireland moves towards 'normality'. However, there is recognition that more staff resources are needed to develop the in-depth focus that the areas of criminal justice and policing require, particularly as devolution of these areas moves closer.

Another key finding is the need for CAJ to sharpen its *communication* generally so that important messages are clearly heard by those at whom they are aimed. To this end, CAJ will develop a communications strategy and seek to secure resources for a new communications role within the organisation. We hope that this will allow CAJ to redesign and improve its website; professionally design its reports along with summary or findings papers for each report (both of which should be freely available on CAJ's website); maximise media coverage of its work, and develop a succinct strap line.

We identified some concerns about whether the *membership* of CAJ was being used to its full potential. We recommended that CAJ give more thought to the role of its members. It has undertaken to do so by, in its strategic plan, identifying the need for a specific membership development role within CAJ. While we counselled caution in any move to increase membership as a means to raise funds, we felt that the membership has the potential to play a crucial role in providing broad based, cross-community support for CAJ and its positions in the context of a complex political environment.

On the question of *funding* generally, we felt that it was important for CAJ to secure sustainable funding from diverse sources. In doing so, CAJ will need to send clear messages to existing and potential new funders that it is adapting to the changes in Northern Ireland but that it will have ongoing, perhaps even increased, funding needs as it does so. Also CAJ was clear that it does not want to enter into any funding arrangement which could, or could be seen to, hamper its independence from the state, political parties, or other special interests. Fundraising will be looked at more closely in a separate piece of work to follow later in 2007.

Overall, we found CAJ to be a very special organisation with a tremendous track record for which it is - rightly, in our view - admired and respected. Its achievements continue right up to the present. Key strengths include success in coalition building, depth of expertise, political judgment, staff commitment and strict adherence to an international human rights framework.

**Sarah Cooke and Steven Burkeman
Independent consultants**

Parading – more of the same?

The announcement of yet another review of parading, albeit a “strategic” review of parading, passed initially with little notice. There have been numerous reviews over the last decade and yet, since the passage of the Public Processions (NI) Act 1998, relatively little has changed as a result of these reviews.

One of the more substantial of the reviews was carried out by Sir George Quigley, but his report issued in 2002 was criticised by almost everyone, CAJ included. For some, his report did not engage effectively with the concerns of the marching orders; yet others complained that residents’ rights had been short-changed; and CAJ and others criticised the potential roll-back from hard-won human rights gains. The wide-scale clamour meant that the Quigley report was by and large shelved.

Clearly however the issues are far from resolved and the St Andrews Agreement in 2006 called for a review “which will examine all the issues around parading in NI with a view to developing an agreed long-term strategy”. So the announcement of a heavyweight panel to carry out the review suggests that more may be expected of this particular exercise. Lord Paddy Ashdown, of Liberal Democrat and Bosnia antecedents, is to chair the review and he is supported by six local people (Sammy Douglas, Mervyn Gibson, Sean Murray, Geraldine McAteer, Garvan O’Doherty and Mervyn Rankin). The latter are drawn from the Orange Order, a residents’ group, community representatives and business but, as with the Parades Commission itself, gender balance was clearly not a major consideration.

The terms of reference are extensive and include -

- Report on the significance and relevance of parading as an expression of faith and culture;
- Examine why certain parades are considered contentious, what their impact is on wider community relations, and if they encourage sectarianism;
- Consider how parades, protests and events which take place on the public highway are regulated in other jurisdictions;
- Consider the merits of local dialogue mediation facilitation and arbitration
- Make recommendations on how parading can be taken forward in a way consistent with the shared future objectives of respect, tolerance, responsible citizenship, promoting equality of opportunity and human rights.

Work on the review has begun with the commissioning a piece of research from Michael Hamilton of the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster, but little further information is as yet available. CAJ is seeking an early meeting with the panel and suggesting that it secure human rights expertise (something which we urged also on the Parades Commission last year).

In requesting an early meeting, we have submitted copies of all our publications/submissions on this topic and highlighted our key concerns as follows:

- a) The human rights of all those involved in the parading dispute must be respected and any conflict of rights must be adjudicated in an impartial and independent way
- b) The process of decision making should comply with international human rights standards and should engage with all the various parties as fully as possible and be as transparent as possible
- c) There is a need to keep the adjudicative function separate from the ‘policing’ function. The PSNI must never again be placed in the impossible situation where the RUC adjudicated whether or not a particular parade would proceed, and thereafter policed that decision
- d) Policing on the ground must be impartial and be human rights compliant, and the police should use no more force than is compliant with European Convention/Human Rights Act standards

CAJ will be arguing that the paradigm of human rights creates a framework within which the conflict of rights on all sides can be fairly mediated and adjudicated, and as such it cannot be set aside.

At the same time, it is obvious that addressing the underlying problems which make parading a hotly contested issue in Northern Ireland requires more than a framework for debate and conflict resolution. If a “shared future” is to mean anything, it must involve finding a way of helping all the parties affected to learn how to respect differences, and share public space in a spirit of tolerance, dignity, equality and respect the rights of all.

We can all only hope that Lord Ashdown and his colleagues will find a way through this long-standing grievance in a way that fully respects human rights.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE U

The UN website at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/spechr.htm> will tell you everything you need to know about its six Committees on human rights, women, children, torture, economic/social/cultural rights, and race.

The very first thing to check before making a submission is whether the UK government has signed up to any relevant Covenant or Convention, especially Optional Protocols, and that it has come into force domestically.

Secondly, make sure that the issue(s) about which you want to comment are relevant to that particular Committee.

Thirdly, check the timetable. Governments have to report to each Committee every few years. It is worth checking with the Committee Secretary when the government's next report is due, as the official timetables often slip.

You should wait until the government's report is available, so that you can counter any inaccuracies it may contain and highlight any omissions. You can ask the Human Rights Unit in the Department of Constitutional Affairs for a copy. However, you need not refer to the government's report so long as your own submission is relevant.

Check to see if the government has ignored recommendations made previously by the Committee. If so, the Committee's criticism tends to be stronger.

Submissions should be sent to the Secretary to the Committee. You should send one copy for each member of the Committee, one for the Secretary, and one for the representative of the Secretary-General of the UN.

Submissions should be sent two months before the government's report is due to be discussed. If you send them in late, you run the risk that they will not be distributed to Committee members.

Some Committees allow NGOs to attend the pre-sessional meetings at which they draw up the list of questions to be put to the government when its report is considered. If you want to influence the questions put to the government, you must get your submission, including your own list of questions, to the Secretary two months before the pre-sessional meeting.

Remember that not all the members speak English, and it is no longer possible to rely on the UN to provide translations. Ideally, you should try to provide a translation in French. If you are not able to provide translations at least make sure you use English clearly and simply, especially in the summary at the beginning, so that those without English as a first language will understand it easily.

There are five golden rules about making submissions:

1. keep it short. Ideally, submissions should be 10 to 12 pages at most, and never more than 30.
2. make sure you explain how your submission relates to the Convention or Covenant. Use phrases like:

"This practice violates Article X of the Convention"

or *"The use of unnecessary force during deportations is a breach of Article Y"*. Committees tend to go through the Covenant or Convention in order, so if possible make your submission in the same order, and put the article number in the heading.
3. be accurate. Check your facts, get them right, and do not exaggerate. Be as specific as you can - it is better to say:

"X% of all people stopped by the police in Belfast in 2007 were males under the age of 25" than *"It is well known that young men are more likely than anyone else to be stopped by the police in Belfast."*
4. do not expect Committee members to have prior knowledge about your country, the issue, or the background. You will need to spell out for them things that you might take for granted. If you use acronyms or words that they may not recognise, explain what you mean - for example, "the PSNI (the Northern Ireland police)".
5. put a short executive summary at the beginning of the submission, and cross-reference it to the main body of the text. Members will read this if they read nothing else, so make sure it is very clear and that it covers all your main points, as briefly as possible.

UNITED NATIONS' COMMITTEES

Always start your submission by explaining who you are. This is your opportunity to establish your credentials and to make sure the members take your submission seriously. If you are making a submission on behalf of an organisation, say something like:

"[Name of organisation] is an independent non-governmental organisation set up in [year] in order to [set out main aims of organisation]. We have X years' experience of [e.g. researching and monitoring the issues you want to raise]."

Next, you should summarise very succinctly, ideally in one paragraph, what your submission is about, before going into detail.

In practice, Committee members are more concerned with the present situation than the past. It is not worth complaining about matters which have since been put right, although it is perfectly acceptable to mention long-standing problems which have never been addressed.

It is very important to substantiate your case as far as possible. If your claims can be verified from an official source, quote it. If your concerns are

shared by organisations that are better known than your own, quote them. If there is a newspaper cutting that neatly sums up the facts of a case, or the reaction of the community, it can be worth including it if space permits. Photographs, official documents such as death certificates, medical reports and so on, should also be considered. If you are short of space, you can summarise the evidence but say that you have copies of the full documents and can supply them if required.

Try to read your submission with a critical eye: if you think someone sceptical about you would query something you have said, or would consider something you have said to be contentious, make it clear that your point is based on factual evidence, not unsubstantiated rumour or opinion. If you agree with something that the government has said in its report, or can praise something the government has done (even though you may consider they have not done enough), it does no harm to say so. The more balanced, factual and accurate your submission, the better.

If you mention named individuals in your submission, mention that you are doing so with their permission, as

Committee members are often concerned about confidentiality, especially if you are dealing with a sensitive issue such as rape or sexual assault/abuse. The only exception to this is when you are referring to well-known cases that have received a lot of publicity.

At the end of your submission, include a list of questions that you would like the Committee to put to the government. There is no guarantee that they will in fact ask your questions, but you may well prompt them to do so, especially if you keep your questions short, specific and precise.

Make your submission look as smart as possible. Even if you cannot afford to spend very much on it, make sure that it is neatly typed, and that the spelling is correct. Give your submission a cover, page numbers and an index. Make it as easy to read and to follow as possible, and try to make it eye-catching.

Your submission is your property, and you can do what you like with it. You can put out a press release saying that you have made the submission, and you can send copies to anyone you think should see it. You should also consider whether there are other parts of the UN human rights machinery to whom you should send your submission, for example, a relevant Special Rapporteur.

You should also consider sending the government a copy of your submission. If you do so, their delegation will come prepared to answer the points you have raised, and you may feel that this is a disadvantage. However, the UN is not an adversarial arena. Indeed, the exchanges between Committees and governments are usually described, not always accurately, as "dialogues". The advantage of letting the government see your submission in advance lies in the possibility that they will look at the issues you raise afresh. They may even take steps to remedy your complaint before the Committee meets, or, if not, they may give the Committee an assurance that they will do so. If you decide to send your submission to the government, mention that you have done so in the submission itself and then refer to any response (or lack of one) you have had from the government when you are lobbying at the UN.

If you decide to attend the session in Geneva or New York in order to lobby the Committee in person, your submission will be your starting point and the means of introducing yourself to members of the Committee. If you are not able to attend, then the Committee may still take note of your submission, ask the government questions based on it, and make findings or recommendations accordingly.

Jane Winter
British Irish Rights Watch

Northern Ireland on the agenda in New York and New Delhi

Policing in Northern Ireland was the common theme for recent visits by CAJ's Director to both the US and India. The first visit (to the US) was aimed at maintaining US interest in the need for continued improvement and progress in policing, and to note that there is still some way to go. In India, the message was more one of noting how far we have all come, and how Northern Ireland's experiences may offer something of value to other parts of the world.

In the US, Congressman Chris Smith, who has long supported the cause of human rights in NI, was instrumental in facilitating the final passage of a momentous resolution



calling for an independent inquiry into the case of Pat Finucane. The significance of the resolution lay in the fact that it was a bi-partisan resolution of both Houses of Congress, and that it gave the lie to any suggestion that it is the Finucane family who are delaying progress. The ball is now in the court of the British government, and the family, and their many friends in the US, are determined to keep up the pressure for movement.

The focus on policing was fairly consistent throughout the visit. Congressman Richie Neal (new chair of the Friends of Ireland), along with other Democratic and Republican Members of Congress, showed great interest in developments, as did Paula Dobriansky (the successor to the President's Special Envoy, Mitchell Reiss), when we met her. While Northern Ireland politicians were largely conspicuous by their absence (so soon after Assembly elections), the Chief Constable, the Police Ombudsman and seven (sic) members (plus staff) from the Policing Board all thought it important to make the annual trip stateside.

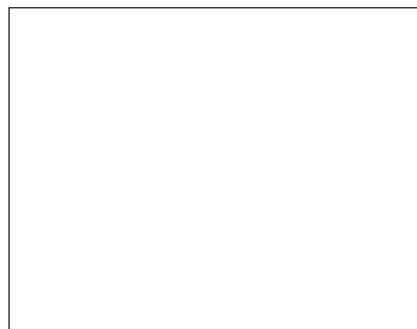
While policing was one of the issues that arose in the course of CAJ's visit, a trip to Washington DC also provided us with an opportunity to present the findings of CAJ's equality report to senior staff at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops who, together with the Presbyterian Church (USA), have long followed the fair employment

debate here in Northern Ireland. We also renewed contact with staff at the New York City Comptroller's Office who follow this debate closely.

So, in search of warmer weather, CAJ's hardy Director went straight onto a 72 hour visit to India (sad but true!). The seminar in Delhi was organised by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), which is a non-governmental organisation that works on a range of human rights abuses in Commonwealth countries, and publishes extensively on policing in particular.

This particular seminar was focused on policing reform, and brought together participants from across South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, & Maldives). Senior police officials, human rights NGOs, government representatives and others came together to discuss common concerns. Given the enormity of human rights abuses throughout the region, it was thought important to remind participants about how bad the situation in Northern Ireland had been. As opposed to many other visitors from the 'global north', CAJ was well-placed to testify to Northern Ireland's very high levels of violence, serious human rights abuses and the centrality of policing to conflict – and indeed to conflict resolution.

Participants were all very interested in hearing details of the programme of reform laid down by Patten regarding human rights, composition, training, structures and legal and political accountability. Debates about the appropriate legislative and institutional relationships to be created between elected politicians and police officials were particularly intense.



Everyone was interested in the role to be played by a completely independent system for the investigation of complaints against the police.

Moving from the US to India, and home again, in quick succession was a healthy reminder of both how far we have all come in policing terms, and how far still to go, and the lessons that our experiences – good and bad – can offer other places. The key objective remains, however, to try and ensure that networks established and information gathered elsewhere can be put to good effect in CAJ's local efforts.

"The prison system failed Roseanne"

The recent week long inquest into the death in custody of Roseanne Irvine shone a spotlight on how vulnerable women are treated within the prison system. Roseanne was found hanging in her cell on the evening of the 3rd March 2004. She had been on remand and had a long history of mental health problems and alcohol dependency; she had previously tried to take her own life while in custody.

Suicide Risk

The Coroner heard that on the 1st March 2004 Roseanne had informed a prison officer that she was going to hang herself. As a result of this, she was moved to C1 landing, variously referred to as a "supervision" or "punishment" block. Roseanne was put into an anti-suicide gown, her underwear was removed and she was given an anti-suicide blanket, a potty and a jug of water.

The court was told that a form known as an IMR21 was opened on Roseanne, this being the form used for the "Referral/Assessment of Suspected Suicide Risk". A prison nurse stated that as Roseanne was on an IMR21, she should have been seen by a doctor at the next scheduled 'sick parade' but the parade due on the 2nd March was cancelled and the duty doctor was not informed of Roseanne's condition.

On the 2nd March, Roseanne was reported as being distressed in her cell and it was recorded that she was pulling hair from her scalp. Despite this self-harm, and without seeing a doctor, Roseanne was transferred from C1 landing to her usual cell in C2 on the evening of the 2nd March. Although no longer on the supervision landing, her IMR21 form remained active. C2 cells are "normal" cells and contain multiple ligature points. On transfer, Roseanne was allowed to wear her own clothes, giving her access to a range of ligature material.

Medical failings

On the 3rd March, sick parade was again cancelled. The court was told that all male prisoners were treated before female prisoners, regardless of what was wrong with them. As a result of the doctor being too busy on the male side, both sick parades of the 2nd and 3rd March had been cancelled on the female wing. This prompted the Coroner to state: "It seems sexist to me. One can't help but get the impression that female prisoners were treated as second class citizens." He was told in replay by a psychiatric nurse "That's just the way it was done."

On the 3rd March, Roseanne received a visit from a probation officer following which she was visibly upset and told an officer that she thought she may not see her daughter again. Later that evening Roseanne reported taking an overdose. A search of both Roseanne and her cell was ordered but not done due to staff shortages.

Despite this, the fact that she remained a suicide risk having reported that she had overdosed that evening, being visibly upset that she may not see her only child again, and without having access to either a doctor or a counsellor, Roseanne was locked up alone in her cell on C2 landing. At around 9.15pm Roseanne was observed by prison staff sitting on her bed writing a note. She requested that the light be turned off. Just over an hour later she was found hanging by her pyjama cord from her cell window bars. A note to her mother and daughter was found by her bed.

NIHRC study

Both Professor Phil Scraton and Dr Linda Moore gave evidence at the inquest. They detailed the findings of their report into prisons commissioned by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.¹ This provided the jury with a stark view of the reality of prison life for female prisoners and the vulnerability of those most at risk. The Coroner also heard evidence from a prison staff that prisons are "a dumping ground" for women with mental health and personality disorders, and that the legislation in Northern Ireland needed to be changed as prison was the only current option in the absence of adequate community placements.

The jury, in their verdict, stated starkly: "The prison system failed Roseanne".

Among their findings they detailed a systemic lack of communication, a failure to prioritise care, and an absence of adequate services on the hospital wing for female prisoners. They stated that prison "is not a suitable environment for someone with a personality/mental health disorder."

The Coroner announced his intentions to write to the Director General of the Prison Service and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland informing them of the jury's verdict.

Laura McMahon BL

¹ *The Hurt Inside – The Imprisonment of Women and Girls in Northern Ireland, published in 2004 and updated in 2005.*

Civil Liberties Diary

April 3 Review by the Inspectorate of Constabulary recommends new hate crime investigators should be introduced to tackle the growing number of racist attacks in Northern Ireland. New recruits should also be given awareness training to highlight issues affecting migrants from other EU states.

April 4 It is announced that the Civic Forum will be restored. The body, which under the terms of the Agreement comes under the remit of OFMDFM, includes representatives from the business community, trade unions and the voluntary sector.

At its annual conference, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers calls for the government to commit more resources to help teachers deal with the challenges posed by increased ethnic diversity in classrooms. More English as an Additional Language (EAL) courses are required.

April 6 Report Patrick MacEntee S.C., published by Irish government, is highly critical of Garda investigation into the 1974 Dublin and Monaghan bombings. However, he found no evidence of collusion in the speedy winding down of the investigation but admitted his research had been severely hampered by a lack of records.

April 11 European Court of Human Rights rules against Natalie Evans in her fight for the right to use the frozen embryos that she created with her former partner who had withdrawn consent. No breach of either 8 (right to respect for family life) or article 2 (right to life) was established.

April 12 Northern Ireland Office rejects calls for the Orange Order to be represented on the Bill of Rights Forum which is to deliberate on the proposed Bill of Rights.

April 13 Police Ombudsman is urged to investigate allegations that Special Branch agents in the South Belfast UDA were protected despite being involved in numerous murders. The allegations centre on Stephen McFerran, currently imprisoned for manslaughter.

April 16 DUP Iris Robinson calls on the Joint Committee on Human Rights at Westminster to examine possible human rights abuses at Muckamore Abbey following the unnecessary hospital detention of over 100 people with learning disabilities.

April 17 PSNI administrative assistant appears in court charged with offences believed to be connected with the UVF.

Report by Police Ombudsman clears police drivers of any wrongdoing in the death of Jim McMenamin. He was run down by a police land rover in West Belfast in June 2005.

April 18 The family of Paul Whitters, shot by police in 1981, calls for a public inquiry into the news that the British army used more powerful plastic bullets than police in the early 1980s. An investigation by Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan has uncovered documentation indicating that soldiers used the more powerful weapon from 1981 onwards while failing to modify their rules of engagement.

April 19 A Strategic review of parading is announced. It will be chaired by former Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown. Other panel members include Rev Mervyn Gibson, Sean Murray, Geraldine McAteer, Garvan O'Doherty, Sammy Douglas and Mervyn Rankin.

April 20 Figures released by PSNI show that there has been a 75% fall in the number of homophobic incidents in Derry in the last six months.

April 25 PSNI announce that they are to investigate allegations that staff at the Police Ombudsman's Office broke the law by leaking sensitive information to journalists.

Raymond McCord visits the European Parliament in Strasbourg and calls on MEPs to put pressure on the British government to bring his son's killers to justice after the publication of the Police Ombudsman's report on collusion between UVF leader Mark Haddock and RUC Special Branch.

April 26 High Court in Belfast begins hearing case brought by two school teachers, alleging discrimination when they were turned down for a promotion. Employment of teachers is normally exempt from the prohibition on religious discrimination but the Equality Commission has argued that European law states that schools are only entitled to differentiate at the point of recruitment and not in internal promotion.

April 27 Three government officials and two prison officials succeed in challenging Billy Wright Inquiry's decision not to grant them anonymity in the High Court. Mr. Justice Gillen has ordered the Inquiry to reconsider.

Compiled by Mark Bassett from various newspapers.

Just News
Human Rights in Northern Ireland

Just News welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

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

Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, **Fionnuala Ni Aoláin**, CAJ Ltd.

45/47 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2BR

Phone (028) 9096 1122

Fax: (028) 9024 6706

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