

Celebrating human rights

This year marks the 60th Anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Declaration was agreed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10th 1948 at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. This milestone is being marked through public commitments by states and the leaders of international organizations attesting to the importance of the Declaration, its ongoing legal and political value, and the need for meaningful implementation of its principles. High profile initiatives include the campaign launched by the "Elders", a group of prominent international statesmen and women, including Archbishop Tutu, Former President Mary Robinson and Graca Machel, seeking a global signature campaign to have a billion people support the Declaration.



Caption: Chief Commissioner Monica McWilliams hands advice on Bill of Rights to Minister Paul Goggins

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Human Rights Commission presented its advice on the Bill of Rights to the Secretary of State. Professor McWilliams noted in setting out the advice that many important objectives could "best be achieved through a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which reflects a common commitment to fairness, equality and justice for all". CAJ will closely examine the NIHRC's advice but, at the important reflective moment as we pause to think about the significance of an extraordinary Declaration which captures the best of state sentiments with regard to human rights, we also urge reflection on our own human rights history in Northern Ireland. As "hope and history" have a moment in rhythm we urge the best of principle, and the lessons of the past be joined together to protective and fair effect.

In parallel, it is also the 40th Anniversary of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland. The emergence of the civil rights movement was grounded in the concrete realities created by the absence of legal protections and the systematic discrimination experienced by the minority community within the jurisdiction. This anniversary has also generated significant celebrations, reflections and gatherings. Most prominently in October, a conference took place in Derry attended by Irish President Mary McAleese and Nobel Peace Laureate John Hume, to coincide with the anniversary of the Duke Street March which was undertaken in the city on October 4, 1968. The keynote address by President McAleese draw parallels between the emergence of the civil rights movement and a wave of equality and rights driven movements that developed in places as far apart as Paris, Washington and South Africa. McAleese notably evoked the memory of "all those ... who set out 40 years ago ... to create a Northern Ireland where every man, woman and child, Protestant and Catholic, Unionist and Nationalist ... would share full equality of citizenship."

These anniversaries come at an important moment when rights protections are squarely on the political table in Northern Ireland. On December 10th, the Northern Ireland

Contents

Celebrating human rights	1
The women's sector and the Bill of Rights Forum	2
The Bill of Rights Forum and the Black and Minority Ethnic sector	2
A Bill of Rights for NI - Including LGBT People	3
UDHR 60th anniversary	4
Mary Robinson: UDHR 60 – much still to do	5
Charlie McMenamin and the Criminal Cases Review Commission	6
Dublin Cutbacks Undermine Rights and Equality Bodies	7
Civil Liberties Diary	8

The women's sector and the Bill of Rights Forum

The experience of women's sector representatives on the Bill of Rights Forum was a bruising one. It isn't that we lead a sheltered existence, unused to heated exchanges – life in the sector requires a robust constitution. What was difficult was the realisation (which became increasingly evident as time went on) that a large percentage of our elected representatives are either hostile to the concept that women have a right to an equality of status with men or do not understand that S75 cannot solve everything. This attitude is not confined to the more contentious issues surrounding reproductive rights, but includes the basic right to parity of representation. It is a sobering realisation.

On the other hand, we were able to have positive and fruitful conversations with those who were willing to listen. We did get to understand much more clearly the ideological complexities of different individuals and political parties. It was an extremely challenging experience to act as convenor for the working group on women, given the range of views contained in the group. Most of the discussions were highly fruitful as participants contributed a wide range of perspectives, ensuring that women's multi-identities and different backgrounds were brought into all discussions. Everything that was considered was based on the lived experiences of women in Northern Ireland and civil society representatives and politicians came together to share their views in a highly constructive manner. Professor Aileen McColgan, legal advisor to the group, was enormously helpful in the process of helping to translate our discussions into the requisite language of human rights. The final report of the working group (despite the dissension of some political representatives) is a positive achievement, providing as it does a clear set of human rights standards for women that address the 'particular circumstances' of Northern Ireland.

Participation in the Forum was a huge learning curve. Chris Sidoti and his team provided us with a crash course in human rights law as we were inundated with human rights texts, international conventions, standards and principles that covered every aspect of human existence. This was both highly instructive and politically useful as we discussed international standards of rights and were assured by the Chair that the final advice emanating from the Forum could not go below the rights currently accepted by the international community. Indeed, Sidoti, in his early, more positive vein (before the dreary inevitability of Northern Irish politics became evident) declared his hopes that we would be able to produce a bill of rights that would build upon what had been achieved elsewhere, providing a model for those who would come after.

The outcome of the Bill of Rights Forum (despite lack of cross-community support) was a robust set of standards relating to the rights of women. Women in Northern Ireland deserve no less than the highest possible standard of rights. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women provides us with a baseline that we must build upon.

Margaret Ward
Women's Resource and Development Agency

The Bill of Rights Forum and the Black and Minority Ethnic sector

NICEM greatly welcomed the Bill of Rights process and the debate which it has fostered and continues to foster amongst a range of diverse communities within Northern Ireland. Despite setbacks and a lack of consensus on many issues we were delighted that awareness of human rights and the need for adequate protection was raised. We support a strong and inclusive bill of rights which draws heavily upon international instruments. As a working group member I found the process at times exasperating. I also had serious concerns that important discussions in the forum were too condensed towards the end of the process. Ultimately it was a positive constructive experience with many valuable lessons for all involved.

At NICEM we recognize that if the rights of those most marginalised within society are protected then society as a whole will benefit. As the most recent OFMDFM good relations indicators highlight, racial violence and prejudice, poor health and low educational attainment persist at a highly unacceptable level amongst the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Community. Although a Bill of Rights may not be able to affect such trends over night, through the means of progressive realisation a real and significant impact can be made.

My own personal experience as a member of the women's working group was tainted with frustration. Although we did have some productive discussion and excellent guidance through the process by our legal advisor, necessary time constraints and the lack of active participation by certain political parties made the debate incomplete.

As preparation for my role within the working group I held a number of small workshop sessions with women from within the BME sector, even such initial discussions

highlighted the difficulty in reaching consensus on what constituted the key issues within such a diverse sector. The need for a strong benchmarking of human rights standards within our domestic law became ever more necessary as a guiding foundational principle. Despite divergence of opinion it was universally clear that nationality, ethnicity, citizenship or residency status should not lead to a denial of rights.

As the process proceeded the importance of ownership of any Bill of Rights by those on the ground within the ethnic minority sector was evermore present. Whilst I can appreciate the hard work done by the outreach workers, I was disappointed at the organisational and resourcing restrictions on the process which prevented this taking place at a thorough and rigorous level. Although there has been significant engagement with the process by those within the sector, a greater level of engagement and understanding would have greatly enhanced the process. I hope that this is taken into full consideration by the Human Rights Commission and Northern Ireland Office when looking at future awareness raising as the Bill of Rights process continues.

NICEM asserts that the Bill of Rights and the Single Equality Bill are key for placing human rights as the cornerstone of peace building in Northern Ireland. More over, an enshrined and high profile Bill of Rights with strong enforcement mechanisms would give a voice to those who are most marginalised. We welcomed the opportunity that the Forum presented as a key step in acknowledging the conflict whilst moving beyond the traditional "two communities" approach in building a more inclusive society and we hope that a strong, succinct, accessible and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland can be fully realised in the foreseeable future.

Helena Macormac
NI Council for Ethnic Minorities

A Bill of Rights for NI - Including LGBT People

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's advice to Government on a Bill of Rights for NI was handed over on – appropriately - 'International Human Rights Day' - 10th December. This represents the next step towards realising a Bill of Rights for NI which for many can mean a raising of the bar in terms of human rights protections.

Northern Ireland is a society in transition, as such it is important to recognise that during this transitional process, as in other post-conflict situations, human rights protections and Bills of Rights have formed part of the jigsaw towards

achieving successful peaceful settlements. There are many instances throughout the world where the transition to peace has entailed similar 'elements' and it is generally recognised that there is a need for greater rights protections in post-conflict societies. Ten years on from the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement, we are creating a culture of equality and human rights.

Given the experiences of people from the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Community here in NI – particularly over recent months - it is incumbent on all of us to ensure we use this opportunity to enshrine respect, promote human rights protections and fulfil the human rights of all - particularly those from our most marginalised communities.

Some of the most recent Constitutions / Bills of Rights drawn up by specific States have included Human Rights protections on grounds of sexual orientation – the South African Constitution is a case in point. Bearing in mind however, that most international human rights instruments do not explicitly include reference to sexual orientation or gender identity explicitly, it is vital that we begin to re-examine these and look at ways of promoting their inclusion. CEDAW for example does not include reference to lesbians and bisexual women. It is, I believe, crucial that we continue to highlight glaring omissions such as these which serve only to perpetuate the violence of enforced invisibility experienced by women, men and young people from the LGB and indeed Trans Communities in every aspect of their lives.

The publication last year of the 'Yogyakarta Principles' – principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity - was timely. As with other international conventions, covenants and bills of rights, it helped raise awareness of issues in a global context. CoSO's two Co-Chairs were the sexual orientation representatives on the Bill of Rights Forum and we referred to and disseminated the Yogyakarta Principles to all participants including political parties, civic society representatives, NGOs and indeed a wider audience which significantly helped and supported us in our roles both on the Forum and its working groups and also during our outreach Bill of Rights events.

If the measure of any society is seen in how well it protects its most vulnerable and marginalised then we have a way yet to go on many fronts. It is through recognition that human rights protections protect us all that we will realise the inclusive, healthy, non-discriminatory and equal society to which we should all aspire and where the inherent dignity of every human being is evident. In such a context it is vital that we ensure effective human rights protections for people from the LGBT communities.

Mairéad McCafferty
Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO)

UDHR 60th anniversary

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 remains an inspiring and influential document. In some senses this is surprising. The Declaration is not an international treaty, contains no mechanism for enforcement and establishes no new institutions. Its impact springs from the emergence of customary international norms, the guidance it continues to provide to those drafting new instruments and - probably of most relevance - its impressive symbolic significance; it has a power few other texts can match. While states in 1948 were only prepared to commit to a non-binding Declaration, those struggling for human rights understood that it could be a stepping stone to more effective protection. The 60th Anniversary of the Declaration is being celebrated all over the world. In Northern Ireland, the Human Rights Commission has chosen the 10th December as the date for the handover of its final advice on a Bill of Rights, evidence that the Declaration has lost none of its appeal.

The Declaration was drafted in the post-WWII context. The memories and practical consequences of global conflict were very much in the minds of the drafters. The first line of the preamble makes this plain:

'Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.' The human rights of all envisaged here as the basis for peace in the world.



The Declaration is generous in its coverage. It promotes the idea of the indivisibility of all human rights, thus it includes economic, social, civil, political and cultural rights. The Declaration embraces the right to work, the right to social security, and to an adequate standard of living linked to health and medical care, as well as a now familiar list of civil and political rights. While Cold War politics encouraged a division in later documents, the wisdom of the Declaration's inclusive approach is now accepted.

One of the persistent, and widely held, myths about human rights is that they encourage a neglect of community interests and responsibilities. Yet the Declaration could not be clearer in its recognition that the world is not simply made up of isolated and selfish individuals. It refers to duties to the community, due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others, and general welfare. It stresses that no state, group or person has any right to engage in activity aimed at the destruction of human rights. The perspective is reinforced throughout the document, and is underlined in the international standards that

emerged afterwards. The Declaration endorses a responsible and community-minded vision of human rights for everyone.

The Declaration reflects widespread international discussion, input and thinking. However, it is no coincidence that the themes in the Declaration echo Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'four essential freedoms' (freedom of expression, freedom of belief, freedom from want and freedom from fear). Eleanor Roosevelt, as Chair of the UN Human Rights Commission, worked tirelessly with many others to realise her essentially human rights vision in the Declaration. When she addressed the UN General Assembly on 10th December 1948 she looked forward to the Declaration being viewed in the same light as the French Declaration of 1789, the US Bill of Rights and other similar human rights instruments. Her hopes have been realised.

Today, in 2008, we inhabit a world of human rights standards and institutions. We rightly expect any new instruments informed by the Declaration to inspire, but also to be authoritative and well-crafted to achieve the intended

outcomes. We correctly seek robust enforcement mechanisms that can deliver genuine change for those who need it most. We all wisely retain a clear and determined focus on the measurable outcomes that should be achieved.

Dignity and justice for all of us

The 60th Anniversary is a time to acknowledge and celebrate this still impressive document. It is also an opportunity for sober reflection. The universal ideals it proclaims are frequently denied in practice throughout the world. How often since 1948 have we repeated 'Never Again'? Despair and passivity can infect even the most optimistic among us. Human rights NGOs, and others down the years, have not been dispirited. Instead, inspired by the Universal Declaration, and using it to argue and work for change, they undertake the difficult task of realising its human rights vision in practice. So, on the 60th Anniversary, we should keep in our thoughts and thank all those - locally and globally - who seek to make these universal human rights matter.

Colin Harvey is Head of the School of Law at Queen's and a Commissioner on the NI Human Rights Commission.

This article is written in a personal capacity only.

Mary Robinson: UDHR 60 – much still to do

Former Irish President Mary Robinson has told a packed Elmwood Hall that, sixty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is still much to be done to make rights an everyday reality for millions around the globe.

The one-time UN High Commissioner for Human Rights delivered the Amnesty International Annual Lecture to a sell-out crowd of some 450 people at Queen's University, as part of this year's Belfast Festival at Queen's and presented in association with the Human Rights Centre at the university.

Dr Robinson, who now heads up the New York-based Realizing Rights initiative, cast her mind back to the leadership shown by Eleanor Roosevelt in bringing to fruition the landmark human rights declaration and the challenges which remain, sixty years on:

"Much progress has been made since 1948, when in an act of courageous leadership, world leaders came together to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration let humanity's shared values come shining through the shadows cast by the dark events of World War Two. Since then many of the principles it set out have become enshrined in international law and we now see better legal protection of rights than ever before. Yet, sixty years on from this solemn declaration to uphold every human's rights, billions still live in poverty, torture is widespread, and free speech is absent in many corners of the world. Only by people standing together, once again, for our shared humanity can these 21st century tragedies be overcome."

She discussed the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and spoke movingly of the scale of violence being inflicted on innocent civilians, including the tens of thousands of rapes of women and girls. This was a theme to which she returned during the subsequent Q&A session, when asked about Amnesty International's policy on sexual and reproductive rights, including abortion. She said that while her values stemmed from a traditional Catholic perspective on abortion, she told the audience that she "knows reality" and that "botched abortions" account for a third of unnecessary maternity deaths in the developing world, and so she thought it would be wrong for personal beliefs such as hers to be enshrined in the law.

Turning her attention to Northern Ireland, she encouraged political parties to work closely with civil society in agreeing a strong Bill of Rights that would benefit everyone and be an "inheritance for future generations":

"A strong, meaningful Bill of Rights could help to provide the sort of equal protection for vulnerable people which would benefit all and disadvantage none. If political parties and civil society can work together to forge such a Bill of Rights, it could help offer a shared vision for Northern Ireland that would be a victory for all. This would be a tremendous prize, worth striving for in spite of past difficulties and political differences."

Looking ahead to the expected report of the Eames-Bradley Consultative Group on the Past, she warned that any truth process designed for Northern Ireland should not focus on a search for reconciliation at the expense of justice for victims. There must, she said, be accountability:

"Facing the truth can be a painful process for any society emerging from years of conflict - that has been the experience the world over. Yet, let's be clear: victims have a right to truth and a right to justice. These rights should not be compromised for the sake of political expediency. The most effective way of establishing long-term peace and reconciliation is to honestly confront the past and commit to justice. I hope that will be Northern Ireland's experience in the months and years ahead."

When later challenged by broadcaster William Crawley on whether she thought that a public process of truth recovery would be necessary, she said that this was a matter for the people of Northern Ireland to decide, but that:

"There can be no room for anyone in the future to say 'I didn't know this was happening'. A truth commission means that people know what happened."

Fuller reports of the lecture were blogged live by Mairead Collins and can be found at Belfast and Beyond: <http://blogs.amnesty.org.uk/belfastandbeyond>

Patrick Corrigan
Amnesty International



Mary Robinson speaking about the 60th UDHR anniversary at Elmwood Hall
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Charlie McMenamin and the Criminal Cases Review Commission

The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) was set up in 1997 on the recommendation of the Runciman Commission established in response to the rash of miscarriages of justice including the Birmingham 6 and the Guilford 4. An interesting study of the work of the CCRC has just been published by Justice *Righting Miscarriages of Justice? Ten years of the Criminal Cases Review Commission*, Laurie Elks. After 11 years it is possible to begin evaluating its role and, particularly, what it has managed to achieve in relation to the many cases lodged from this jurisdiction.

The CCRC hits the headlines when high profile ex-prisoners have their cases referred back to the Court of Appeal by the CCRC after they have re-investigated the cases and found them suspect. A recent example was the case of Danny Morrison and others whose convictions were quashed on the basis of a secret note of relevant evidence uncovered by the CCRC. In all 22 cases have been referred to the Court of Appeal.

CAJ has been given extensive material in relation to one of these cases. In 2007 the Court of Appeal quashed the conviction of Charlie McMenamin from Derry. We are grateful to him for this material as it provides an important case study for assessing the CCRC's *modus operandi*. Mr McMenamin was arrested at the age of 16 in March 1978. He was interviewed extensively, ill-treated physically and psychologically and signed confession statements before he was allowed to see his parents or his lawyer. He pleaded guilty at trial on the advice of his lawyers that he was getting a good deal and would only serve three years Borstal training. He applied to the CCRC in 2003.

It is instructive to read the CCRC's investigation report. The investigators accessed all available court records and files held by the DPP/PPS. They talked to Mr McMenamin, his family and all available lawyers involved in the case. They traced a co-defendant relevant to the case and instructed experts to provide relevant reports. A 53 page document outlines their investigation and the reasons for their decision to refer to the Court of Appeal.

These include:

1. The conditions of detention and interview, including the fact that, at the age of 16, he was interviewed without a lawyer or parent present;
2. That officers who interviewed Mr McMenamin had been involved in allegations of assault in other cases;
3. That Mr McMenamin had an alibi in relation to two of the offences for which he was convicted and pleaded guilty to an offence that never occurred; and
4. That there is now greater awareness of the vulnerability of young people.

The Court of Appeal quashed Mr McMenamin's convictions on the basis of points 1 and 3 above and didn't feel it

necessary to address the other points identified by the CCRC.

Another recent case concerned Raymond McCartney and Eamonn MacDermott. Once again this case hinged on the fact that RUC interrogators had been mentioned in other cases of alleged ill-treatment and drawing up of false statements during questioning. Indeed, in relation to one officer, the DPP had found a *prima facie* case against a Detective Constable French, though no prosecution was taken forward. The Court of Appeal found that, had the trial judge known this, the confessions that were the sole basis of conviction would likely have been discredited.

These recent and other cases outlined in the new book on the CCRC prompt a number of reflections: What of the police officers who are mentioned in multiple cases as having been involved in ill-treatment, in telling lies and concocting false confessions? Their victims were convicted and served sentences. The regime which allowed abuses to take place has been replaced by mandatory video and audio recording and the automatic presence of a solicitor. The police officers have not been held criminally or civilly accountable.

What of the record of the judiciary? In all these cases, one has to question whether it is enough to say that the judiciary found on the basis of the facts in front of them. Mr McMenamin put it as follows: "those in places and positions of authority who felt that arresting and imprisoning teenagers after beating and psychological torture was within the realm of "keeping law and order" – my story should be a lesson to them all".

What of compensation? In each of the cases, people have been wrongly deprived of their freedom and deeply affected practically and emotionally. Mr McMenamin again: "I find it hard and distressing [to write down the details of my case] because of the memories it brings back to me ...". His account is both terrifying and typical. Yet in each case, there is resistance by the state to providing compensation. If someone has been falsely convicted, there should be a presumption that compensation will be paid.

Finally, What of the CCRC? It has developed its practice and its confidence. It has brought successful closure to large numbers of people in this jurisdiction and in Britain. It has been open to a critique of the system that operated during the conflict and has cumulatively begun to expose the over-reliance on confession evidence in circumstances where police oppression was only too easy. While the CCRC process is not speedy, it remains the only available means of challenging conflict-related convictions, or indeed others. As such it is a valuable and important legal recourse.

Dublin Cutbacks Undermine Rights and Equality Bodies

The Republic's economy is in trouble and the Government is looking for cutbacks all round; or nearly all round. There is no word of them selling the Government jet or reducing the inflated ranks of Junior Ministries that most of the public have never heard of.

The general cutback figure for public bodies seems to be between 5% and 10% but the story is very different in the equality and human rights sector. The anti-racist watchdog body NCCRI, which has championed the rights of Travellers and immigrants and has monitored racist incidents for many years, has had all its modest public funding stopped and will have to close down.

The Combat Poverty Agency, which produced independent and critical analysis of the impact of Government policies on poverty levels, is to be abolished and have its functions subsumed into the Department of Social and Family Affairs. No-one is holding their breath waiting for the same sort of sharp-edged independent analysis to come out of the Department.

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC), which was already being run on a shoe string, is to have its budget cut by 24%. What is left will just about pay the rent and the salaries of the staff, leaving little or nothing for the Commission's basic functions of monitoring Government policy for compliance with human rights standards, commissioning research and intervening in court cases that raise human rights issues. Ironically, only this summer the UN's Human Rights Committee had called on the Irish Government to strengthen the IHRC by giving it more resources.

And the Equality Authority, which takes on hundreds of cases of discrimination every year as well as having an impressive record of research and educational work, is to suffer a 43% cut. When inflation is taken into account, that means its funding will be halved. And that is not all. The Government is pushing ahead with decentralising the Authority to outside Roscrea, a midsized town in Tipperary with very poor public transport links. The result will be the loss of a number of highly experienced staff who will not be able to up stakes and move, and much more difficult access for people with complaints about discrimination.

The Government's National Action Plan Against Racism is also closing down at the end of the year and its functions will be taken over by an Inclusion Unit in the office of the Junior Minister for Integration which has specifically excluded Travellers from its remit.

All this amounts to a devastating blow to the rights and equality sector with three bodies closing down and the other two, the IHRC and the Equality Authority, effectively crippled and unlikely to be able to carry out their functions

properly. And this is happening at the start of a major recession which will inevitably hit hardest at the weakest and most vulnerable in society. This is just the time when unscrupulous employers will try to force down wages and conditions for women, immigrants, the disabled and other vulnerable groups and turn back progress that was made in better times.

The recession is likely to aggravate social tensions and there is a real danger that immigrants, who were welcomed here in the boom years, will be made scapegoats for the effects of the downturn. Active anti-racism voices will be needed more than ever in the coming period but they will have been silenced. And with crime levels likely to rise and tempers frayed, there is likely to be a clamour for more draconian laws and for the Gardai to cut corners in fighting crime. That in turn will only store up problems for the future.

This is precisely the time when rights and equality bodies are more necessary than ever if serious damage is not to be done to the social fabric. The amounts of money involved are very small in the overall scheme of things but the problems that will build up will cost a lot more to solve in future years.

So what is going on?

The most charitable view is that the Government regards human rights and equality as optional extras that can be dumped with the office plants once times start to get rough.

A more cynical view is that equality, anti-racism and human rights bodies are regarded as a nuisance that only encourage awkward and unpopular minorities like Travellers and asylum-seekers to demand their rights. And the general climate of cutbacks provided a convenient opportunity to close down some of the troublesome bodies and cripple the others.

The only good thing to come out of this is that it has spurred a broad spectrum of organisations in the human rights and community and voluntary sector to form a new Equality and Rights Alliance (ERA) to fight the cutbacks. ERA has mounted a vigorous campaign that may yet turn back some of these cuts but it has also decided to keep going beyond the current crisis so as to mobilise resistance to any further cutbacks and to begin the work of re-building the rights and equality structures at the earliest opportunity.

The Equality and Rights Alliance can be found at <<http://eracampaign.org/weblog/>.

Michael Farrell is a solicitor working for Free Legal Advice Centres in Dublin and a member of the Irish Human Rights Commission. This article is written in his personal capacity.

Civil Liberties Diary

4th November

Dame Joan Harbison is unveiled as the "Older People's Advocate" ahead of the creation of a commissioner to lobby for the elderly.

5th November

The Irish Human Rights Commission says a proposed 24% reduction in its budget will leave it completely unable to perform its functions.

6th November

Sir Hugh Orde reveals that the PSNI awarded contracts worth more than £5 million to alleged UVF leader Richard Jameson's building company before he was killed in 2000. This happened despite Mr. Jameson twice failing police vetting procedures.

The Chairman of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry tells families of the victims that he plans to hand over his report to the NI Secretary of State in autumn of next year. This means the report will most likely not be published until 2010. The last oral hearing was in January 2005.

It is announced that oral hearings for the Inquiry into the killing of Robert Hamill in Portadown by a loyalist mob will begin in January. The Inquiry was taken four years to begin after a series of legal challenges.

7th November

NI Secretary of State Shaun Woodward holds crisis talks with the Historical Enquiries Team over lack of funds for the Operation Ballast inquiry into Special Branch agent Mark Haddock's links to 19 murders. The NIO had earlier announced funding would not be brought forward for the inquiry.

11th November

The body of Danny McIlhone is discovered in Wicklow. The 19 year old west Belfast man went missing in 1981 but the IRA did not admit responsibility for his murder until 1999. His is the fifth body of the "disappeared" to be recovered.

13th November

Chief Commissioner for the Equality Commission Bob Collins warns that children should not be burdened with deciding their academic future at age 11. His remarks coincide with new research showed educational inequality among social groups such as Protestant boys, gay young people and children from the Traveller community.

The House of Lords unanimously rejects a claim that former RUC Chief Constable Sir Ronnie Flanagan failed to properly protect Catholic schoolgirls from degrading and inhumane treatment during the Holy Cross dispute in 2001. Solicitor for "E", Fearghal Shiels, indicated that the case would now be brought to the European Court of Human Rights. The appeal was supported by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

17th November

Denis Bradley, joint Chair of the Consultative Group on the Past with Lord Eames, says that people guilty of crimes linked to the Troubles will not be handed an automatic amnesty but that Northern Ireland's society must face up to its past if it is to move on.

19th November

John Larkin QC is announced as Northern Ireland's first Attorney General since 1973. The human rights barrister will be offered the position as part of a political deal on the devolution of policing and justice powers.

20th November

Former UVF member and Special Branch informer Mark Haddock wins the right to challenge plans to explore his criminal history during a High Court bid to stop the media disclosing his future whereabouts.

21st November

The father of murdered UVF leader Billy Wright says he has no confidence in the lead counsel of the inquiry into

the death of his son. David Wright called for an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the departure of the former lead counsel, Derek Batchelor QC.

25th November

Enhanced counter-terrorism laws are passed in the Assembly. The legislation is an extension of the Counter Terrorism Bill from Westminster. The introduction was possible using Emergency Provisions at Stormont.

26th November

Mr. Justice Gillen warns Ian Paisley Jnr. that should he refuse to comply with any High Court order he could face jail. He has been asked to reveal the identity of a prison officer who told him about alleged file destruction policy within the Northern Ireland Prison Service. The legal proceedings were brought by the Inquiry into the Billy Wright murder.

Compiled by Mark Basset from various newspaper

Just News

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