

Human rights after the landslide

By Brian Gormally, CAJ Director

The landslide Conservative vote in England and Wales has given the Boris Johnson government a large majority in the House of Commons. There will therefore be few political constraints - within the Tory Party or Parliament - on what the government will be able to do in the next few years. It is clear that Brexit will happen, in the sense that the UK will leave the EU. However, it is much less clear what the final relationship between the UK and EU will look like, and what effect there will be on the economy, the environment and social standards.

Leaving Brexit aside for a moment, there is a good deal to concern human rights activists about the result of the general election. In a broad sense, the Conservative campaign was the heir to and based on the core characteristics of the Leave campaign: mendacity and irrationality linked to themes of nativism, populism and thinly disguised racism. The decisive victory of such a campaign gives grounds for fear in the future, especially in the area of immigration.

In the Tory Manifesto, there are words of comfort about protecting the rights of migrants, but it also includes the chilling phrase: "and we will ensure that the **British people are always in control**". That is a fairly open depiction of superiority of those defined as British and their differential access to the levers of "control." Quite what that means for those born in the UK but who exercise their 'birthright' to be Irish is open to question. It is fairly clear in ascribing a second-class status to immigrants.

There are other, specific threats to human rights protections in the manifesto. On Page 48, there is a threat to 'update' the Human Rights Act, the means by which the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is brought into domestic law.

There have been more explicit attacks on the act by Tories in the past; the difference here is that this government has no need to use rhetoric to attract the extreme right wing - they have already been incorporated in the course of the Brexit process. This commitment is also made in the context of an overall pledge to examine the constitutional relationship between the UK Parliament, government and the courts, including the role of judicial review. The manifesto says: "In our first year we will set up a **Constitution, Democracy & Rights Commission** that will examine these issues in depth." If that happens, this commission will be an important battleground for the defence of human rights.

In respect of the legacy of the conflict here, the manifesto fails to give support to the Stormont House Agreement (SHA) and instead says: "We will continue to seek better ways of dealing with legacy issues that **provide better outcomes for victims and survivors and do more to give veterans the protections they deserve.**" If the Conservatives have better ideas than in the SHA to help victims then we have yet to hear them. Furthermore, the last part of the sentence seems to include support for the discredited and frankly often unhinged calls for an amnesty for British soldiers.

If the Conservative victory in the election means a call to action in the defence of human rights, we can be encouraged by the election results in Northern Ireland. The three NI parties that won the majority of seats at Westminster - as well as a clear majority of the popular vote - all signed a joint declaration for human rights in June 2018 (along with the Green Party). Among other things, that declaration said: "We urge all political parties and both governments to intensify their efforts to ensure that outstanding rights and equality matters (including the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland) are advanced as a matter of urgency." As we move into a new decade, under the rule of a government that threatens human rights, that commitment is something to hang on to and fight for.

Inside this issue of Just News....

Raise Your Voice: The fight to end sexual harassment in NI

Page 2

Looking forward to 2020 - a year of anniversaries for women's rights

Page 3

The impact of tax and social security reforms in NI

Pages 4 & 5

Have recent changes made it more difficult for the UK to avoid implementing human rights obligations in NI?

Page 6

CAJ-OSJI Principles on Protest and the Right to Information - the Honduras case study

Page 7

Civil Liberties Diary - September & October 2019

Page 8

CAJ publishes 2019 annual report

On Wednesday 11 December 2019, CAJ's 37th AGM took place in UNISON and we launched our annual report for 2019. We are living in strange times, dominated by Brexit, but the work of CAJ has continued, unabated, over the last twelve months.

Download the report: <http://bit.ly/2rog2M5>



Raise Your Voice: The fight to end sexual harassment in NI

By Elaine Crory, Good Relations Worker,
Women's Resource & Development Agency

Two years ago, the MeToo movement spread rapidly worldwide, and as quickly as people began sharing their stories of sexual harassment and assault, the opinion pieces appeared. 'Has MeToo gone too far?', 'MeToo is out of control', and of course the many pieces lamenting the 'misery of the post-MeToo workplace'.

And for all that fear, what truly came from MeToo? Even in the limited industries where it made an impact, many of those who were named have thrived and prospered, thoroughly unaffected by the movement. And what has changed on the ground? Have rates of sexual violence reduced? Do women and girls feel safer? Are they more likely to see justice if they are victims of a sexual crime? The numbers seem to suggest the opposite. Last year, reports of rape and sexual violence increased statistically, part of a steady increase in recent years. At the same time, both prosecutions and convictions are falling. Reports of domestic violence and abuse are also rising: up 10% in Northern Ireland in the last year alone. Many offenders get probation, if they are punished at all. We are not doing well, as a society, when it comes to keeping people safe from gender based violence.

There is still an enormous task ahead of us, and it has to go beyond hashtags and opinion pieces. Tackling sexual misconduct and indeed gender-based violence more broadly, has to go beyond individual cases and individual perpetrators. There needs to be a genuine and sincere examination of social attitudes. Behaviours don't just occur in a vacuum, and all of it; the prevalence, the low conviction rates, the paltry sentences, have the same root cause; the social attitudes associated with this kind of behaviour. And so we have to start at the root; with sexism and misogyny.

The very first stepping stone on this journey must be to acknowledge the breadth and depth of the issue. Gender based violence requires a huge amount of attention, focused work and, indeed, ring-fenced funding. The lack of political will to tackle these issues stems from either a lack of awareness of the problem or an unwillingness to face the pervasiveness of violence. Therefore all the resources that we need rely on the most basic building block of all; widespread understanding of the realities and the causes of gender-based violence. We desperately need to spread awareness and to have a wide-ranging national conversation about this issue, responding strongly to those who dismiss the problem as rare and exceptional or the work of 'monsters' who are promptly dealt with by the justice system. To this end, we launched a project called **Raise Your Voice**.



Raise Your Voice is a joint project funded by Rosa, the UK Fund for Women & Girls, and involving the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), Women's Support Network (WSN), NI Rural Women's Network (NIRWN), and Reclaim the Agenda. It focuses on sexual harassment and sexual violence – two of the most common forms of gender-based violence – in communities across Northern Ireland. We are working to increase public awareness, equip people with skills to tackle the issue and to lobby for legislative advances in all related areas.

The goal is to help people to understand the underlying issues so that gender-based violence is taken seriously. The task is enormous, but part of the way we are approaching the project involves working with community groups all over Northern Ireland in small interactive workshops, discussing the manifestations of sexual harassment, consent, victim blaming, the impact of harassment on victims, and how best to tackle the problem. We will reach at least 100 women in person over the course of the first year of our work. The conversations, learning and resources shared with these women will be distributed far beyond the confines of the initial workshops. We will concentrate on the sharing of anonymous stories, both as a way to increase awareness of the impact of this problem and as a strategy towards mutual support.

Year 2 will see us working directly with men, in the hope that we can dispel some myths and empower them to challenge misogynistic behaviours and attitudes in their peers, and indeed in themselves if needed. We will also step up the lobbying and campaigning element of the project, which has already begun. Raise Your Voice does not expect to fix a problem that is so deep-seated and embedded in the fabric of our society. We can open new conversations, however, and begin a process.

You can find more information and resources on our website: www.raiseyourvoice.community, or follow us on Twitter [@RaiseURVoiceNI](https://twitter.com/RaiseURVoiceNI). We are delivering workshops now, so please get in touch if you would like to book one, or to share your story anonymously.



Looking forward to 2020 – a year of anniversaries for women's rights

By Jonna Monaghan, Project Coordinator,
Northern Ireland Women's European
Platform (NIWEP)

A new decade, and a new opportunity? In 2020, two central international mechanisms for women's rights celebrate major anniversaries. In March, the Beijing Platform for Action turns 25. In October, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security marks its 20th anniversary. Both were historic at their time, and have since shaped action by both legislators and activists. The anniversaries will be marked by the UN and other global actors, but a key question is, how are women's rights protected at the end of the 2010s, and how can international mechanisms such as these make a difference today?

The **Beijing Platform for Action** was agreed in 1995 at the 4th World Conference on Women, and has been credited as the declaration that institutionalised gender equality as a legitimate priority in policy making. It also became known for the 'women's rights are human rights' speech by Hillary Clinton, then First Lady of the US. Over 180 governments agreed to commitments under 12 critical areas of concern, including poverty, education, health, violence, the economy, the environment, human rights, institutional mechanisms, and the girl child. They were encouraged and held to account by over 30,000 activists, who took part in a parallel forum. This included a delegation from Northern Ireland, involving academics, trade unionists and activists, who brought back an ambitious agenda for women's rights locally, including strengthened employment protections; improved infrastructure, such as better childcare provision; and updated legislation on reproductive rights.

In the early years after 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action inspired many policy changes across the world. For example, it introduced the concept of 'the girl child', which highlighted and enabled action on issues from child marriage and female genital mutilation to gender bias in education. The Beijing Platform for Action also institutionalised gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, which has contributed to action in areas from employment rights to women's participation in public life. However, the rate of change has slowed over time, and particularly in recent years, new challenges to gender equality have appeared. At a recent event looking forward to 2020, hosted by NIWEP, it was noted that some of the original asks for Northern Ireland have only been achieved recently, while others remain outstanding.

The passing of **UN Security Council Resolution 1325** was a major landmark event during 2000: it was the first resolution focusing

on the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and humanitarian responses. It also highlighted the gendered impacts of conflict, and has influenced policy and practice, for example, in relation to peace keeping.

UNSCR 1325 is based on four core pillars: participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery. A gender perspective and women's participation in decision making at all levels are central principles within the resolution, which emphasises women's core role in sustainable peace building. Principles also include supporting women's peace initiatives, protecting and strengthening the human rights of women and girls, and protecting women from gender based violence.

UN member states are expected to develop National Action Plans on women, peace and security as a means of implementing the resolution. A central issue is that each state can choose their own approach. For example, the UK's National Action Plan is entirely focused overseas. Meanwhile, Ireland's latest NAP takes an all island focus and includes specific outreach activities for Northern Ireland.

Progress on implementing the principles of UNSCR 1325 in Northern Ireland has been limited in recent years. There is an NI Assembly All Party Group on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security, which in 2014 published a report on an inquiry into the implementation of the principles of UNSCR 1325, undertaken in collaboration with the Westminster Associate Party Parliamentary Group on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security. This Inquiry identified areas for action in relation to the four pillars, including representation of women in public life, enabling women to engage within local communities, understanding the health impacts of living through conflict, and acting on violence against women. There was also a toolkit produced by the women's sector, which similarly is awaiting to be implemented.

In summary, the agenda set out by both the Beijing Platform for Action and UNSCR 1325 is ambitious, but by no means fulfilled. While it is undeniable that times have changed since 1995, the fundamental issues and calls for women's rights remain the same – despite positive developments. This is recognised in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include Goal 5 on gender equality, and are increasingly highlighted as a priority across the UN. All of these mechanisms are also, importantly, global and offer a shared platform for action. Perhaps this is their core value, and these anniversaries can serve as a springboard for inspiring a new wave of action.



Northern Ireland
Women's European Platform

The impact of tax and social security reforms in NI

By Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission



The NIHRC has recently published a cumulative impact assessment (CIA) of tax and social security reforms in Northern Ireland from 2010 through to 2022 (including measures already enacted and those proposals that are currently in the pipeline). *Cumulative impact assessment of tax and social security reforms in Northern Ireland* also examines the effect of the mitigations package introduced by the NI Executive to ameliorate some of the adverse impacts of the social security reforms, including effectively not implementing the 'bedroom tax' or the benefit cap for families.

The assessment has the virtue of including improvements to national minimum and living wage, plus tax changes alongside social security reforms, including the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The assessment utilises the tax transfer model, a micro-simulation model applied to Northern Ireland data from the Family Resources Survey and Living Costs and Food Survey. The impacts of the reforms are analysed by household income decile, a method that involves ranking households in Northern Ireland by net income adjusted for family size, with the poorest households in decile 1, and the richest

households in decile 10. The assessment covers age, gender, disability, household size, and household composition. It does not cover race and ethnicity, including travellers, as the sample size is too small. It also does not cover community background as access to this data (which is collected) requires an End User Licence which was not readily available to the researchers.

Interestingly, producing a cumulative impact assessment is something the Treasury has resisted doing for a number of years, citing technical issues when the reality is about a lack of political will.

The backdrop for undertaking the research is that the current mitigations package in NI is due to finish at the end of March 2020. The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 requires the Secretary of State for NI to produce a report for the UK Parliament on the future of mitigation measures (i.e. what still will be in place after March 2020). As a result, the research uses the findings to develop a bespoke mitigations package designed to progressively target the highest areas of need based on low income. The full report is available from the NIHRC website: <https://t.co/epFsnqIJat>.

Key findings from the Cumulative Impact Assessment

Despite the rhetoric of the 'squeezed middle', it is actually the lower middle income households who have been most adversely affected. The impact of the cumulative tax and income policies include:

1. The biggest average total losses fall in the bottom decile 2 and 3 of household income distribution (around £900 per year). The bottom 10% have lost around £250 a year. The smaller loss for this segment is largely a product of projected higher take up for Universal Credit than tax credits and the other benefits UC replaces.
2. The losses are regressive across most of the household income distribution with a small loss for the top 10% of earners, while the highest incomes over the next 30% have on average gained significantly from the changes.
3. Households with children experience much larger losses than households without children, particularly lone parent households who have lost around £2250 a year (around 10% of annual income). Households with three or more children with overall average annual losses of around £2575.
4. Women lose more on average than men largely due to being more likely to receiving social security benefits including tax credits.
5. Households with two or more people in work benefit more from direct tax changes than households with only one wage earner, who in turn benefit more than households with no-one in work. This is a product of the improvements to national living and national minimum wage.
6. Households with children and at least one adult with a disability, those with both an adult and child with a disability, and those with only a child with a disability have all fared particularly badly, losing £600, £1800 and £2100 a year respectively.

A number of specific reforms have had a particularly adverse impact, including the four-year freeze on key means-tested social security benefits; the introduction of the two-child limit; and real term reductions of work allowances in Universal Credit. In contrast, the move from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment has resulted in overall gains in net income – a reflection that the original savings projected by this reform compared to continuing with DLA have not materialized in practice.

The impact on child poverty is stark. Focussing on relative income poverty and using the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) households below average income (HBAI) statistics, the tax and social security reforms are forecast to increase relative child poverty by 8%. This would result in more than one in four children being in poverty before housing costs are deducted, rising to almost one in three children after housing costs are deducted. Contrast this with the Labour government's announcement in 1997 that child poverty will be eliminated by 2020.

A New Mitigations package

The research acknowledges that mitigations ameliorates rather than tackles the fundamental problem. Nonetheless, as the UK Parliament's NI Affairs Committee and Work and Pensions Committee have noted in their report on *Welfare Policy in Northern Ireland*, the ending of the 'bedroom tax' mitigations would leave 34,000 households worse off by an average £12.50 a week. Additionally, the removal of the benefit cap for families would lead to 1,500 households losing on average £42 an average week.

The mitigations package proposed in the research preserves the 'bedroom tax' and benefit cap mitigations, as well as the cost of work allowance proposal. It also offsets the two-child

limit, expands payments for low income families with children, makes payments to households containing an individual who has a disability, and increases the rate of Carer's Allowance. It also proposes additional expenditure on independent advice services and suggests that any underspend be ring fenced for other anti-poverty measures. The costs of the package are set out in the table below.

There is a recognition within the Department for Communities (DfC) that there remains a compelling case for continuing to offset these policies beyond March 2020, especially given the limited availability of one bedroomed properties in the public sector and the level of impact the benefit cap has on families. In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive, there appears a limited appetite to go further. Nonetheless, if the devolved Assembly and Executive were to return then, there is a costed set of proposals ready for adoption. Throughout the process of producing the report, the NIHRC and the researchers engaged productively with the political parties and with DfC's analysts.

In human rights terms, the right to an adequate standard of living and right to social security are both economic and social rights designed to be progressively realised. *Cumulative impact assessment of tax and social security reforms in Northern Ireland* reveals how tax and social security reforms have led us in the wrong direction. Moreover, increasing inequality condemning between one in four and one in three children to a life of poverty is nothing less than a 21st Century scandal.

Cumulative impact assessment of tax and social security reforms in Northern Ireland

Howard Reed
(Landman Economics)
Jonathan Porter
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November 2019



Proposed Northern Ireland mitigations measures: estimates of number of household affected, average gain per household and annual cost

Measure	Nos of households affected (thousands)	Annual gain per household affected (£)	Cost (£m)
Offsetting bedroom tax	34	650	22
Offsetting benefit cap	2	2184	3
'Cost of Work' allowance	102	341	35
Increasing Carer's Allowance	9	302	3
Best Start Grant	36	283	10
Offsetting 'two child limit' from UC, HB and Child Tax Credit	17	3325	56
Additional payment to children in low income families	127	195	25
Additional payment to disabled people in low income households	121	272	33
Total cost:			186

Have recent changes made it more difficult for the UK to hide behind devolution as a way to avoid implementing human rights obligations in NI?

By Daniel Holder, CAJ Deputy Director

Implementing human rights obligations from UN or Council of Europe treaties is ultimately the duty of the state party that is a signatory to them. In the case of NI, that means the UK government, and where legislation is required, Westminster. That does not mean devolved government, or councils, should not deliver such obligations in their areas of competence. They should, but if they refuse to do so clearly the state party is not 'off the hook' but is obliged to intervene to ensure treaty based obligations are met.

This legal principle is reflected in both the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) and its implementation legislation. The GFA makes clear that Westminster has continued role in legislating for NI on non-devolved issues. Paragraph 33b of Strand 1 provides that the UK Parliament will legislate "as necessary" to ensure UK "international obligations are met" in respect of NI. There is then a power vested in the Secretary of State under S26 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to issue binding directions to Stormont departments to ensure international obligations are abided with. A similar power is vested in NI departments in relation to councils compliance with treaty-based obligations, under S107 of the Local Government NI Act 2014.

In practice, however, it has been a great source of frustration that these powers have been ignored and misrepresented. Successive British governments have falsely hidden behind the devolution settlement as a way of getting out of implementing their international obligations in NI. This includes duties under the GFA and St Andrews Agreements themselves – including those on legislating for the Bill of Rights and Irish Language Act. More recently, we witnessed UK refusal to release funding for legacy inquests, despite ECHR requirements.

It's not as if there were no precedents for the use of the GFA-derived framework. After the post-St Andrews restoration of devolution, the DUP blocked the Assembly legislation to transpose an EU Gender Directive (due to references to transgender/ gender reassignment in the regulations). In response, Westminster in 2007 quietly legislated on the Assembly's behalf. Yet this precedent has not stopped cries of trespass on the devolution settlement when calls have



been made for Westminster to step in and ensure other international obligations are complied with. Two recent events, however, have progressed the principle considerably.

The first was the explicit framing by Stella Creasy MP - with support from CAJ - of her amendment on NI abortion law around the duties to implement the 2018 UN CEDAW ruling (CEDAW/C/OP.8/GBR/1). The provision (S9 NI Executive Formation Act 2019) provides that the Secretary of State must implement the recommendations of the CEDAW report that resulted from a complaint under the Optional Protocol of CEDAW.

The second event was the judicial review brought by a survivor of institutional abuse ('JR80') in relation to the failure of the Executive Office and Secretary of State to bring forward a compensation scheme for victims, as was recommended further to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. This case was heard in the NI Court of Appeal in November 2019 and dealt with the scope of the Secretary of State's S26 powers to direct compliance with international obligations. In this instance, the courts held that international obligations were engaged, specifically compliance with the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), given that the brutality and sexual abuse described amounted to torture. The court found that the Secretary of State should have considered the exercise of the powers under S26 to direct compliance with the treaties, and had not done so.

We may be some way off from the UK fully recognising its responsibilities to ensure treaty based commitments are abided by in NI, but recent developments do at least mean it is more difficult to misrepresent to whom the duties fall.

CAJ-OSJI Principles on Protest and the Right to Information - the Honduras case study

By Daniel Holder, CAJ Deputy Director

In September 2019, CAJ deputy Director Daniel Holder travelled to Honduras for a series of engagements relating to the Principles on Protest and the Right to Information – which have been jointly developed with the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) as part of a CAJ contract with OSJI. The principles were published in 2018, in a number of languages, and were formally launched this December at an inter-American human rights event.

Honduran human rights NGO, C-Libre, have applied the principles to the situation in Honduras through a significant research exercise in relation to Honduran protests. This involved obtaining large amount of material through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, that was ultimately made available and has allowed the identification of patterns.

By way of background, after a period of improvement, the human rights situation in Honduras significantly deteriorated following a US-endorsed military coup of 2009, which removed President Manuel Zelaya. There was a deterioration in the rule of law: many judges were removed and a climate of impunity was created, including in relation to the targeting of human and environmental rights defenders and journalists. More recently, there have been significant protests following elections in 2017 that some considered to be rigged. There were also protests earlier in this year against legislation to privatise health and education provision, as well as ongoing protests against transnational mining companies in the communities they affect. Although the Honduran Human Rights Commission has stated that 95% of protests are peaceful, the use of force and dispersal techniques are routine, including widespread use of CS gas, and, at times, live fire by the security forces or private security actors.

C-Libre, who originated as an NGO to protect journalists, have set up a protest observatory and harnessed the OSJI-CAJ principles as a vehicle to measure state compliance with human rights standards, something which complements their work on the ground. CAJ's role during our visit to the country in September was to put forward the lessons from the NI experience of reform and engage



CAJ Deputy Director Daniel Holder gave a series of interviews to local media outlets, including, as pictured here, with Sandra Maribel

in the application of the principles. We were able to present the NI experience of 'bad practice' in the past in managing public assemblies, while also highlighting the benefits of the institutional, legislative and policy reforms that have taken place in recent years as part of the peace process, including on policing accountability and decision making. NI presently is a jurisdiction compliant with the terms of the OSJI-CAJ Principles.

Our engagements included meetings with C-Libre; an International Roundtable with C-Libre, CAJ, Article 19 (Mexico), and UN OHCHR on justice reforms and experiences on the right to protest; and meetings with senior officials in the Honduran Human Rights Commission and National Preventative Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders. We also spoke at a conference which launched the Honduran case study on the application of the principles and did a number of TV and radio interviews. This included contributing to a radio show with veteran broadcaster Sandra Maribel, who, in a stark reminder of the dangers facing journalists and other human rights defenders, has since been the victim of an abduction attempt by armed assailants.

The human rights situation in Latin America - including most recently following the coup in Bolivia - is once again in a state of deterioration, with the lack of respect of the right to protest being a particularly concerning area of practice. We know from the NI experience that suppression of protests can unravel into much broader conflicts and will continue to work on the principles as one tool human rights activists can harness.



Civil Liberties Diary - September & October 2019

Compiled by Sinead Burns from various newspapers

9 September 2019: Thousands of people on both sides of the abortion debate have marched in Belfast. The Rally for Choice group gathered in support of recent Westminster legislation that aims to change abortion law if the Stormont executive is not restored by 21 October 2019. The anti-abortion group, March For Their Lives also gathered in Belfast in protest at the impending changes to the law.

18 September 2019: New figures have shown that there has been a significant increase in the number of older people seeking help for homelessness in Northern Ireland since 2012/13. There has been a 30% increase in the number of older households presenting as homeless, from 1,875 in 2012/13 to 2,445 in 2017/18.

Meanwhile, campaigners have criticised the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), claiming that people are living for months in homeless hostels before being

officially recognised as homeless. Homeless Not Voiceless campaigners have stated that long delays have resulted in people languishing unnecessarily in temporary accommodation before being awarded full duty applicant status (FDA)

19 September 2019: A report by Queen's University Belfast has found that the sale of sex in Northern Ireland has increased since a change in the law made paying for sex a criminal offence in 2015. The QUB report concludes that the legislation has had no deterrent effect in the purchasing of commercial sexual services. Of the two cases that have so far been prosecuted, neither involved prostitution or human trafficking.

22 October 2019: Abortion has been decriminalised and equal marriage is to be legalised in Northern Ireland on the back of legislation introduced at Westminster. Women seeking terminations and the medical staff who help them can no longer be



prosecuted following the repeal of sections 58 and 59 of 1861 Offences Against the Person Act. This is despite an eleventh hour (failed) attempt led by the DUP to prevent the change by forming a new NI Executive. There will be a six-month interim period before services are rolled out in NI, during which women will be able to access free travel to receive treatment in England. Medics have been advised to follow guidelines from their professional bodies when making an assessment on abortion cases.

The first same-sex marriages are set to take place on St Valentine's Day 2020. Westminster must now bring in new rules for same-sex marriage by January 13, with February 14 set to be the first day that ceremonies can take place.

CAJ attends FIDH conference in Taipei, Taiwan

CAJ is an active member of FIDH, the International Federation of Human Rights. In October, we were delighted to join FIDH's 40th Congress, which was held in Taipei, Taiwan. We were represented by Úna Boyd, who coordinates our Immigration Project. The congress was attended by over 400 human rights defenders from across the globe. The first two days featured talks and presentations on issues ranging from reclaiming the universality of human right; strategic litigation; democracies in crisis; surveillance and artificial intelligence; refugee and migrant rights; and climate

change. During the remainder of the event, FIDH member organisations – including CAJ – voted on and adopted resolutions on various human rights issues. The last day of the conference included a regional meeting, with CAJ taking part in the 'Western Europe +' session. This meeting was used to decide upon the common concerns and policy priorities that Western European organisations would like to see FIDH take forward during the next three years. The meeting concluded that the rule of law (encompassing the rise of populism); migrant and refugee rights; and climate



change were three of the most important issues. CAJ looks forward to continuing to engage with the work of FIDH during the new year ahead of us.

Just News is published by the Committee on the Administration of Justice. Readers' news, views and comments are welcome.

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