

Annual Report 2023



CAJ

Committee on the
Administration of Justice

Promoting Justice / Protecting Rights

Annual Report 2023

Promoting Justice
Protecting Rights

© Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) Ltd 2023.
Published December 2023.

The material may be reproduced, free of charge, in any format or medium without specific permission, provided the reproduction is not for financial or material gain. The material must be reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. If the material is to be republished or issued to others, acknowledgement must be given to its source, copyright status, and date of publication. This publication is available in digital format on our website.

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) Ltd
1st Floor, Community House
Citylink Business Park
6A Albert Street
Belfast
BT12 4HQ

☎ 028 9031 6000 ✉ info@caj.org.uk

🌐 www.caj.org.uk ✂ @CAJNi

ISBN 978-1-873285-18-3

Contents

Chairperson's foreword	4
Introduction	6
Democratic, progressive governance	10
Accountability in policing, criminal justice and public administration	14
A just resolution to the legacy of conflict	16
A society where prejudice is confronted and tackled	20
A fair and humane immigration system	22
Increased equality	26
International solidarity	30
Communications	34
Our funders	35
Staffing and Executive	37
Reports & Submissions	38

Chairperson's foreword

Professor Anna Bryson

The global swing towards right-wing populism has brought in its train increasingly worrying attacks on human rights, peace, and the rule of law. The role and significance of human rights defenders and organisations like CAJ in such a context cannot be understated.

In spite of a chorus of concern from international human rights experts and organisations including the UN and the Council of Europe, the UK Government pushed ahead with what is now the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023. This Act marks the first time in our peace settlement that one of the two state parties has unilaterally abandoned one of the key post-conflict bilateral agreements (the 2014 Stormont House Agreement). The majority of those who responded to the public consultation on the Stormont House Agreement Bill signalled broad support for the proposed measures and opposition to an amnesty. The Government nonetheless prevaricated and then announced that 'the current system is failing everybody' and it was therefore necessary to close down existing routes to truth recovery and accountability in order to meet the needs of victims. This deliberate misrepresentation of victims' voices undermines the basic fundamentals of a functioning democracy. CAJ has worked hard both domestically and internationally to advance informed critiques of the legislation and to mobilise opposition. We are currently actively involved in legal challenges to the legislation.

It is equally concerning that some UK Ministers have repeatedly threatened to undermine the application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), or even to withdraw from it, and have proceeded with specific legislation that undermines its incorporation. This is in spite of the fact that incorporation of the ECHR into Northern Ireland law is a core safeguard of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

In addition to highlighting the risks of following Vladimir Putin's lead in withdrawing from the ECHR, CAJ has highlighted the impact of the UK Government's Illegal Migration Act, and related measures, on both migrant rights and the broader peace settlement, with a specific focus on the impact such UK policies have on the land border. Throughout this year, we have also highlighted concerns regarding the state response to the ongoing activities of armed groups in our society, particularly in relation to racist and sectarian intimidation from housing.

The absence of a functioning NI Assembly has inevitably stalled progress on core policies in which CAJ has played a central role, including the legal obligation to adopt an anti-poverty strategy, the development of the other 'social inclusion' (equality) strategies, and new legislation to tackle hate crimes and misogynist crime.



We also note the absence of any official process to seek to reform the institutions through implementation of the outstanding rights-based commitments in the peace settlement, including the Northern Ireland Bill of Rights.

This grim vista has unfolded as we commemorate 25 years since the signing of 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. CAJ played a crucial role in ensuring that equality and rights provisions were embedded in the DNA of the peace agreement. CAJ had, by that stage, already garnered an international reputation for independently and effectively navigating legally complex and controversial issues through the rigorous application of human rights frameworks. That skillset is no less in demand as we seek to meet the challenge of ongoing threats to the peace agreement, human rights, and the rule of law.

In April 2023, CAJ bade farewell to its Director, Brian Gormally. I would like to take this opportunity to renew, on behalf of the Executive Board, our gratitude to Brian for his faithful service to the organisation over the course of the past 12 years. In many respects Brian's success can be measured by the strength and invigoration of the team that he left behind. He was succeeded as Director as Daniel Holder who has thrown himself into the role with characteristic gusto, skill, and enthusiasm. With relatively modest resources and a staff of six persons, CAJ continues to punch well above its weight and delivers a staggering volume of work, with many notable successes and achievements.

On behalf of the Executive, I would like to sincerely thank all of our staff and volunteers for their ongoing commitment and dedication throughout this year. The challenges ahead are not to be underestimated, but, as before, we face into the New Year with a steadfast and renewed determination to continue the fight for a fair, just, and rights-based society.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Anna Bryson'.

Anna Bryson
Chairperson of the CAJ Executive Board

Introduction

Daniel Holder, CAJ Director

It was a pleasure to take up the role of CAJ Director at the start of April, following the retirement of Brian Gormally and consequent recruitment process.

CAJ continued under Brian's stewardship until this point, and he was given a memorable send off in April with both a retirement party and a special dedicated issue of our newsletter Just News to mark his lifetime of activism, not just at CAJ, but before this as well. I started in CAJ as Deputy Director just shortly after Brian became Director and we worked together for over ten years. It is a great honour to take up the Director role, standing on the shoulders of all my illustrious predecessors.

I think it was Brian who coined the description of CAJ as a 'think tank with teeth' and we have continued to bite sharply over 2023, which was another busy year for CAJ with a continued stream of activity, not least over the UK Government's legacy legislation. The last year was also, post-pandemic, a year of numerous CAJ events. As part of our joint policing project with the Irish Council of Civil Liberties (ICCL), we held a seminar on racial profiling in law enforcement and a conference on police surveillance north and south. Through the vehicle of the Equality Coalition, we also held two Stormont-based events with multi-party sponsorship, the first on tackling misogyny in the criminal law with Baroness Helena Kennedy; the second on the legal obligation on the NI Executive to adopt an anti-poverty strategy. We also held a digital rights seminar and two 'constitutional conversations seminars' as part of the LSE Gender, Justice and Security Hub. Among our events on legacy was a legal symposium in June that featured Robert Spano, former president of the European Court of Human Rights, as the keynote speaker. We also organised a seminar to look at impunity, both internationally and in Northern Ireland, which was held on the 50th anniversary of the Pinochet coup in Chile (11 September 2023).

Both events were held in Queen's University Belfast, the latter with members of an international expert panel convened by the Human Rights Centre at the University of Oslo at the request of CAJ and the Pat Finucane Centre to report on the extent of impunity in relation to the Northern Ireland conflict. We also held events in partnership with our partners in the North West Migrants Forum on the ongoing issues of racial profiling and 'hard borders' faced by migrant communities in the border area, including a 'townhall' meeting in Dublin.



CAJ also continued to use strategic litigation – including with the support of our close partners in the PILS project. We progressed a number of legacy cases and a challenge relating to peace process safeguards and the rights of the Irish speakers as a linguistic minority. 2023 took place in the context of the Northern Ireland institutions (the NI Executive and Assembly) not sitting, again. Unlike the previous collapse in 2017, there was no official participatory process to feed into, such as the one that led to the New Decade New Approach deal that restored the institutions in 2020.

Work across our six priority areas has continued. These are Democratic Governance, Policing and Justice, Legacy of the Past, Confronting Prejudice, Increasing Equality, and Immigration. We also continued to be active in international networks and engagement through FIDH, the European Implementation Network, and academic collaboration projects.



CAJ has enjoyed support from the Human Rights Fund in a funding cycle that continues until 2025. We have also received core support from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. We continue to diversify our funding - in 2023 were delighted to secure a five year 'backbone' grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, which has allowed us to mainstream our post-Brexit migrant rights project previously supported by this Foundation into our core work. We also were pleased to receive three years core support from the AB Charitable Trust and a further project grant from the Legal Education Foundation (T:LEF). We also have secured programme support on a recurring basis from the UNISON campaign fund for our work with the Equality Coalition, which is co-convened by CAJ and UNISON. Additionally, we received support from the Community Foundations based in both parts of the island of Ireland for the cross-border policing work with ICCL, and from the Community Foundation NI (alone) for the work with the impunity panel. We also have collaborative international academic projects with the University of Bristol (on peacebuilding, NI, Lebanon and Colombia) and LSE (through the Gender Justice and Security Hub). Most recently we were delighted to secure a three year grant from Esmeé Fairbairn, which will allow us to formalise and grow our partnership work with the North West Migrants Forum. During this year, we were also supported by Unbound Philanthropies in a project to produce a model Hostile Environment (Northern Ireland) Repeal Bill.

We acknowledge support from all our funders, without which we could not continue our work.

CAJ has a small, but dedicated staff team as well as the Director. Roisín Brennan manages the office and finances; Robyn Scott handles communications and the Equality Coalition; Eliza Browning is our Policy Officer; Gemma McKeown our Solicitor; and Úna Boyd our Immigration Solicitor. We have also been supported by student volunteers in 2023, including two formal PhD placement students on legacy work, Damien Rea and Monica Pitt. During 2023, we engaged in some novel team building. While an exchange day with ICCL in Dublin was a more traditional mutual learning affair, the CAJ team also set sail on a 19th century boat out on Belfast Lough during the summer as part of a lottery-funded activity – all made it back to shore safely!

2024 will no doubt throw up the continued mix of big challenges and detailed micro battles on which CAJ thrives. We remain well prepared for what is to come.

Daniel Holder
Director



CAJ staff on two team building days. We sailed on the restored 1892 trawler, the Leader, and attended a boat building workshop. Both days were organised by Silvery Light Sailing and funded by the Heritage Lottery.

CAJ's vision

CAJ's vision is a peaceful society based on human rights and equality. A peaceful, rights-based society must have a number of elements or supporting pillars which we aim to help build. We work for democratic, progressive governance; accountability in policing, criminal justice and public administration; a just resolution to the legacy of the conflict; a society where prejudice is confronted and tackled; a fair, humane immigration system; increased equality; and international solidarity. It is under these headings that we organise this account of our policies and work during 2023.

Democratic, progressive governance

CAJ strives for the full implementation of the rights-based commitments of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (GFA), and subsequent peace process implementation agreements.

Our work focuses on protecting the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in Northern Ireland law through the Human Rights Act 1998, as a cornerstone commitment of the GFA. We also advocate for the long overdue Northern Ireland Bill of Rights. We press for effective implementation of the broader rights-based safeguards over executive and legislative power found in the peace settlement and related UN and Council of Europe treaty-based obligations. We emphasise the importance of rights-protections in the outworking of Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol/Windsor Framework, including the need for decision makers to make such considerations central to the ongoing discussions on constitutional change.

The 25th anniversary of the GFA took place this year in the shadow of non-functioning devolved institutions. As of yet, there has no structured negotiation process for the return of power sharing with an opportunity for civil society to input.

GFA@25 2023 - The 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

Democratic participation and the 'chill factor' – The state response to ongoing intimidation: To mark the anniversary, we organised a closed 'chill factor' seminar, which was held under the Equality Coalition banner in UNISON in March 2023. This event aimed to capture the lived reality of those who have experienced the ongoing intimidation of civil society actors in NI, with a specific focus on the paramilitary dimension of this intimidation. Activists and academics in NI continue to be intimidated despite the 'rights affirmed' by the GFA, which include freedom from sectarian harassment, full and equal political participation for women, and the right to seek constitutional change by peaceful and legitimate means.

A special edition of Just News was produced to tie in with the seminar. This issue featured a report from the event, as well as articles authored by others with direct experience of intimidation on topics including 'Not talking about the constitutional question'; 'Islamophobia in Northern Ireland: A growing concern'; 'The effect of paramilitaries on women in Northern Ireland'; 'Anonymous account from a unionist feminist who has experienced the "chill factor" from within her own community'; and 'The intimidation faced by Irish language speakers and activists'.

Other anniversary activities: CAJ issued a joint statement with the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) on the anniversary of the GFA, focusing on legacy. It is available here: www.bit.ly/FIDHImpunityStatement. CAJ also participated in broader initiatives around the GFA, including through attending the anniversary conference at Queen's University Belfast; contributing to a range of podcasts; and speaking at events, including a webinar organised by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP) and an event held during Féile an Phobail in August. We also inputted into, and facilitated, an international jurists delegation from the ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights, who subsequently produced an independent report on *The crisis of the Human Rights framework of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement*. In late 2022, we met with Tánaiste (now Taoiseach) Leo Varadkar TD alongside UNISON, and other NGOs, to discuss concerns on peace process compliance.

Protecting the ECHR and Human Rights Act

CAJ was part of a successful campaign to retain the Human Rights Act 1998, participating actively in the UK-wide HRA Coalition and providing Northern Ireland specific input. We intervened on several bills, which sought to diminish the incorporation of the ECHR in NI law. In November 2023, we spoke at an online conference organised by the Human Rights Consortiums in Scotland and Northern Ireland to mark 25 years of the Human Rights Act.



The special 'chill factor' edition of Just News.

Constitutional Conversations and Rights Based Safeguards

CAJ has continued mobilising the Equality Coalition to campaign against rollback of existing protections, while also advocating for the unimplemented commitments of the peace settlement to be enacted, including through the following actions:

- We positively influenced an independent review of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (a key GFA safeguard), which was triggered by the Cabinet Office in a context where the Commission risked losing its UN status as a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI).
- We provided Written Evidence to the inquiry led by the Westminster Northern Ireland Affairs Committee into 'The effectiveness of the institutions of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement'. Our submission focused on safeguards based on objective legal rights standards.
- We contributed to an online seminar on 'Human Rights and the Constitutional Future of Northern Ireland' organised by the Human Rights Partnership. Additionally, CAJ (through the Equality Coalition) partnered with the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University to hold two academic 'constitutional conversations' seminars, with support from the LSE Gender, Justice and Security Hub. The first, 'Could rights based-safeguards make Stormont functional?', took place in October and focused on unlocking sustainable governance through reforming the present structures of the NI Assembly and Executive in line with the rights-based safeguards set out under the GFA. The second seminar, held in November 2023, addressed the question of 'How could minority and women's rights be protected in a United Ireland?'. This seminar explored how the rights of linguistic minorities, women, unionists, and migrants could be protected in the constitutional and legal structures for Ireland if there was a 'yes' vote for a United Ireland in a referendum held under the GFA.

Pictured (from L to R) is former CAJ Director Martin O'Brien; Patricia McKeown, Regional Secretary of UNISON; former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and President of Ireland, Mary Robinson; and CAJ Director Daniel Holder, who were attending the 'Agreement 25' conference in Queen's University Belfast.



Treaty-based obligations towards the Irish and Ulster Scots speakers

The treatment of the Irish language continued to be a touchstone issue for compliance with the framework of the peace agreements. The peace agreements clearly identify the need for a shift from the 'English-only' policies of the past towards a framework based on linguistic diversity and specific commitments towards the Irish language.

In 2006, the St Andrews Agreement included a commitment on the development and introduction of an Irish Language Act. This commitment was reiterated, in part, in the 2020 New Decade New Approach deal. Subsequently, the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 finally became law in late December 2022. We intervened significantly in the passage of the bill and were regular commentators on it in the media. We also queried the impact of the UK decision to shift recognition of Ulster Scots away from language towards ethnicity, and highlighted the risks of conflating a cross-community linguistic minority with 'Ulster Britishness' in the Act. We also gave oral evidence to British Irish Parliamentary Assembly inquiry on Irish and Ulster Scots.

CAJ engaged in a number of joint interventions with Conradh na Gaeilge, the representative organization for the Irish speaking community, presenting joint research on Irish Medium Education to the Education Authority Board, and shaping (and where necessary, challenging) Councils' policies on bilingual street signage in line with international standards. With support from PILS, we acted as solicitors for Conradh in an appeal before the Information Rights First Tier Tribunal. This involved challenging a decision by Belfast City Council to withhold documentation that set out the reasoning for a 'call in' decision (envisaged as a minority rights safeguard), which had in this case determined bilingual signage would 'disproportionality adversely affect' a section of the community.

We also intervened in the Belfast City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the decision to introduce bilingual signage in a leisure centre, focusing on how the concept of 'good relations' has been used in practice to frustrate the purpose of the Section 75 equality duty and to either delay or block policies aimed at advancing equality because they are viewed as politically contentious.

Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol/ Windsor Framework

CAJ continued to actively participate in the NI Civic Working Group on the Protocol, convened by Professor Katy Hayward. This included a range of engagements with EU representatives from member states, the Commission and Parliamentary delegations. In 2022 and 2023, CAJ attended the 'EU Citizens Gathering' in London organized by the EU Delegation to the UK. We are an active member of the EU Delegation Monitoring Network, ensuring NI specific issues are raised in this important platform. On top of this, we were also active in the Ad Hoc Committee on North, South, East, West Cooperation, which is convened by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, meeting with UK ministers and EU delegations. CAJ also participated in the EUSS Civil Society Alliance, engaging on a broad range of issues impacting EU citizens' rights.

We continued to work for the effective implementation of the UK commitments in Article 2 of the Protocol/ Windsor Framework that there will be 'no diminution' of certain rights protected under the GFA as a result of Brexit. We had specific impact on the NI Human Right Commission (NIHRC) and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), who have been granted oversight and enforcement powers over the 'no diminution' commitment. Their official reports on the scope of Article 2, and a number of thematic priorities, have reflected our input and concerns. CAJ and the Equality Coalition were both speakers at the launch of the two Commissions' annual report on Article 2 in July 2023. CAJ also spoke at the launch of research on 'Frontier Workers and their Families' in October 2023.

Environmental Rights

We continued to work with environmental rights activists and organisations around the policing of environmental protesters and administrative remedies, developing a 'know your rights' resource for environmental protestors, and engaging in the Mobuoy Remediation Stakeholder group. This is a growth area of our work.



Emma Campbell, Alliance for Choice, speaking the first of two 'constitutional conversations' seminar organised by the Equality Coalition and TJI.

NGO meeting with the EU Parliamentary delegation.

Accountability in Policing, Criminal Justice and Public Administration

Policing – joint project with the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)

CAJ continued a body of work promoting human rights compliant policing through a joint project with our sister organisation in Dublin, the Irish Council of Civil Liberties (ICCL). The project was funded by the Community Foundations of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The first phase of the project consisted of two major comparative policing reform conferences in Belfast and Dublin respectively, from which detailed reports were produced. The second (current) phase of the project is about drilling down into specific thematic issues of concern. Civil society, law enforcement, and oversight bodies have been the focuses of recent project events.

The first seminar held under the new phase of the project took place in a roundtable format in the Guildhall, L'Derry, in June 2023 on the subject of 'Racial Profiling in Law Enforcement', bringing together both professional and lived experience expertise. Speakers included representatives from CAJ, ICCL, North West Migrants Forum, Irish Network Against Racism, and the National Black Police Association.

This was followed by a major conference in Dublin on 'Police Surveillance North and South: Covert Intelligence, Facial Recognition Technology, Oversight and Human Rights' (held during October 2023).



The conference report drafted from the proceedings of our conference on 'Police Reform in Both Jurisdictions'.



Participants in the CAJ / ICCL roundtable on 'Racial Profiling in Law Enforcement'. Those pictured include Daniel Holder, CAJ; Lillian Seenoi-Barr, Beverley Simpson, and Naomi Green, North West Migrants Forum; Dr Lucy Michael; Andy George, President National Black Police Association; and Shane O Curry, Director, Irish Network Against Racism.



The CAJ / ICCL policing surveillance conference. CAJ Director Daniel Holder chairs a panel comprised of the former Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, Baroness Nuala O'Loan; and investigative journalists, Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney.

Covert Policing

Legal framework for informant criminality: We engaged with the PSNI following our 'Third Direction' case with Reprieve, Privacy International, and the Pat Finucane Centre, which had challenged the compatibility of MI5 guidance authorising informant criminality with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and prompted legislative change at Westminster. In a considerable advance further to our representations, for the first time the PSNI partly declassified its policy on informant (CHIS) criminality, committing to not authorising crimes that would constitute ECHR breaches, a key CAJ ask.

Police Surveillance of Journalists: CAJ supported journalist Barry McCaffery over revelations of PSNI surveillance of his phone when he was investigating a story of potential police corruption further to a case before the Investigatory Powers Tribunal.

Policing Practice Interventions

CAJ held a series of high-level engagements with the PSNI at Assistant Chief Constable level.

In collaboration with the Migrant Centre NI and Women's Policy Group (WPG), we achieved movement from the PSNI in a commitment to review the policy of referring victims/ witnesses of crime to the Home Office, which has a particular negative impact on victims of domestic violence.

In relation to hate expression in public space, the PSNI also agreed to reassess their Service Instruction and factor this issue into their review of hate crimes policy; we also engaged on the process for dealing with housing intimidation, an issue further covered below.

CAJ was involved in a number of engagements with grassroots groups in both republican and PUL (Protestant, unionist, loyalist) communities regarding significant concerns over policing practices. These experiences to date have fed into the joint ICCL conference and are subject of further inquiry.

Accountability for handling of Coronavirus

CAJ has engaged extensively with the emergency legislation put into effect in response to the pandemic, scrutinising compatibility with the ECHR and other human rights standards.

CAJ responded to a call for evidence from the Independent Commission on UK Public Health Emergency Powers, which is supported by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law. Our submission focused on the following areas: Restrictions on gatherings, legal certainty and consistency; The Coronavirus Regulations and the Northern Ireland Assembly; Northern Ireland specific travel regulations; and NI Restrictions on vaccine eligibility. More information on the Commission is available here: www.binghamcentre.biicl.org/independent-commission-on-uk-public-health-emergency-powers.

CAJ engaged with the NI Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU), who have core participant status in the UK public inquiry, with our submissions informing their evidence.

A just resolution to the legacy of conflict

CAJ and academic members of our board continued to be 'go-to experts' on transitional justice measures to deal with the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict and were regularly involved in commentary in the media.

In 2020, the UK Government signalled it would abandon the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, which had been reached between the UK Government, Irish Government, and NI political parties, and would have established new legacy mechanisms. Instead, the UK alone developed proposals for an amnesty and a new legacy body with limited independence and powers, which evolved into the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill in 2022. The legislation will close down the existing 'Package of Measures' dealing with NI legacy cases, which was established as a result of cases taken by CAJ and others to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) 20 years ago, at a time when such mechanisms are most delivering for families. These mechanisms include legacy inquests and Police Ombudsman reports. With the legacy bill finally becoming law in September 2023, attention has turned to legal challenges to the legislation.

We succeeded in shaping and mobilising international opinion against the UK Legacy Bill, with engagement with the Council of Europe and UN human rights mechanisms. CAJ first raised and elevated the idea that the Irish Government could take an Inter-State case against the legislation to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and this has become the overarching campaigning ask of the sector. An Inter-State case, which has now been recommended by an Oireachtas committee, would allow the Legacy Act to be challenged directly in Strasbourg, without having to exhaust the lengthy process of domestic litigation.

Legacy litigation

Legal Symposium: litigating the legacy bill- with Robert Spano former President of the European Court of Human Rights. In June 2023 CAJ held, at Queen's University Belfast, a major invite-only academic/legal seminar with Robert Spano, former lead Judge of the European Court of Human Rights as keynote speaker. There were also inputs from Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner of the NI Human Rights Commission, and Dr Isabella Risini LLM, a visiting professor at Walther Schücking Institute at Kiel University, Germany, who is an expert on Inter-State Cases. This seminar provided a safe space to discuss informed litigation in relation to the legacy bill and was attended by lawyers, academics, and other legacy practitioners involved in challenging the legacy legislation.

CAJ also continued to represent the McKenna family in the 'Hooded Men' legal proceedings, regarding failures to properly investigate the use of torture. In June, the PSNI issued an apology for police involvement in the treatment of the Hooded Men and committed to an investigation in light of findings in our case to the UK Supreme Court. CAJ also continued to represent the Thompson family in a legacy inquest and the Shanaghan family following a Police Ombudsman report.

The legal symposium, held in June 2023, with former President of the European Court of Human Rights, Robert Spano, as keynote speaker. Pictured from left to right is Prof Kieran McEvoy, QUB; Robert Spano; Alyson Kilpatrick, NIHRC; Daniel Holder, CAJ; and Prof Anna Bryson, QUB.



Engagement with the Council of Europe and UN

CAJ engaged extensively with Council of Europe and UN human rights mechanisms regarding the legacy bill, including through regular written 'Rule 9' submissions to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. In 2023, the UN High Commissioner, UN Special Rapporteurs, and the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner had raised serious concerns regarding the compatibility of the Bill with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and UN treaties, with calls for its withdrawal.

CAJ engaged extensively with the Committee of Ministers, in particular in providing authoritative and detailed critiques of amendments to the legacy bill while it progressed through the UK Parliament. On two occasions, in March and September 2023, CAJ presented to representatives of the Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg, who subsequently issued strong decisions raising significant concerns regarding the legislation. These decisions will carry significant weight in legal challenges to the European Court of Human Rights in relation to the legislation.

In undertaking this work, CAJ was supported by the European Implementation Network (EIN), a Strasbourg-based NGO working on the implementation of European Court rulings, of which we are members.

Independent Expert Panel on Impunity and the Northern Ireland Conflict

In light of the legacy bill closing down existing official processes, the Pat Finucane Centre and CAJ approached the Human Rights Centre of the University of Oslo who, agreed to convene an 'International Expert Panel on State Impunity and the NI Conflict', with a remit of producing an independent report on the extent to which there has been impunity for human rights violations during the conflict (more information here: bit.ly/impunitypanel). The panel was established with academic, policing, and legal experts from Argentina, Israel, the UK, Ireland, South Africa, and Norway.

The panel undertook five study visits during the year meeting families, lawyers, representatives of legacy mechanisms, and other key stakeholders, including both Governments. The work of the panel was supported by two funded PHD placements with Queen's University Belfast embedded in CAJ, and students in the University of Essex Human Rights Centre and the University of Oslo. The panel were also involved in a number of public events in Belfast, Ulster University, and Derry. We are grateful for support from the Community Foundation NI for this project. The final report of the panel is expected in early 2024.

Parliamentary passage of the legacy bill

Throughout the passage of the bill, CAJ continued to engage with Parliamentarians, political parties, and other stakeholders, and was a regular commentator in the broadcast and print media, speaking on a broad range of platforms at home and internationally. Our interventions contributed to opposition amendments being tabled and information being drawn out of ministers that informed UN and Council of Europe submissions. In particular, CAJ quickly turned round detailed critiques of Government amendments to the bill. In November 2023, we published a detailed compendium of all our submissions relevant to the Bill, which provide a detailed record of the narrative of the bill coming into being and will assist legal challenges to it.



CAJ's compendium of submissions on the legacy bill.

September 11 seminar – Queen's University 'Impunity and the NI Legacy Bill - 50 years on from the Pinochet coup'

We organised a legal and human rights-focused seminar in of Queen's University Belfast on 11 September, which explored combatting impunity internationally and locally, fifty years on from the 1973 Chilean coup. This was the first opportunity for CAJ, along with the Pat Finucane Centre, to present a detailed analysis of the legacy bill once the final amendments had been confirmed. Another panel, featuring academics and lawyers from the Independent Expert Panel on Impunity and the Northern Ireland Conflict, explored impunity internationally, with particular focus on Argentina, the impunity deficit post 9/11, and torture.



Group shot taken of some of the experts involved in the impunity seminar. Front row (L to R): Professors Anna Bryson, Joan Loughrey, and Louise Mallinder (all based at QUB); Maria José Guembe, Argentinian human rights lawyer (impunity panel member); Alan Becknell, Pat Finucane Centre; and Prof Kieran McEvoy (QUB). Back row (L to R): Student, University of Oslo; Daniel Holder (CAJ); Gisle Kvanvig, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo; Dr Ron Dudai, Ben Gurion University; and Kjell Erik Eriksen, former police officer (impunity panel member). Dr Aoife Duffy, University of Essex, also joined the event remotely.

A society where prejudice is confronted and tackled

CAJ mobilised the CAJ-UNISON Equality Coalition on issues related to improving the legislative and state response in combatting hate crime, including intimidation with a paramilitary dimension.

We previously helped to secure a judge-led review on hate crime and incitement to hatred legislation in Northern Ireland, which reported in late 2020.

Since this time, the NI Department of Justice (DoJ) has engaged in further consultation on new legislation, the introduction of which has unfortunately stalled due to the lack of a sitting Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive.

CAJ continued to work with grassroots organisations supporting victims of hate crimes on improving the policing and broader state response to such incidents.

'Preventing misogynistic crime, the Scottish Model', with Baroness Helena Kennedy KC

We held a major seminar on preventing misogynistic crime in the Stormont Senate chamber in December 2022. The event sponsors were the former Justice Minister Naomi Long MLA (Alliance), Sinéad Ennis MLA (Sinn Féin), and Diane Forsythe MLA (DUP). The keynote speaker was Baroness Helena Kennedy KC, presenting on her report, 'Misogyny – A Human Rights Issue', which provides a legislative blueprint for tackling misogyny within the criminal law (the 'Scottish Model').

This Equality Coalition event obtained significant political and sectorial buy-in regarding shifting the conversation around hate crimes and misogyny towards the codified approach contained within the Scottish Model. We have continued a dialogue with DoJ while we await the appointment of the next Justice Minister.

Housing Intimidation

Further to the oral evidence we provided to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in November 2022 for their inquiry on 'The effect of paramilitary activity and organised crime on society in Northern Ireland', we have continued to firmly place the issue of the state response to paramilitary housing intimidation on the agenda. Such intimidation can be of a sectarian or racist nature and is the primary driver of housing segregation and related housing inequality in Northern Ireland. The response of public authorities can, however, be limited to verifying threats and moving victims. Our work in this area has received significant broadcast and print media coverage, including a package on BBC UK News at Ten.

Further to the written and oral evidence provided by CAJ to a pre-sessional working group on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), housing intimidation is now on the agenda of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) as it examines UK compliance with ICESCR. We also recently briefed the Council of Europe's European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the Commission on the Integration of Refugees on the issue.

Removing Hate Expression in public space

CAJ continued to campaign on the back of the recommendations from our report, *Dealing with hate expression in public space in Northern Ireland*, including our recommendation for a statutory duty on public authorities to remove hate expression on their property, or in areas within their functions. This was reflected in Recommendation 15 of the final report of the aforementioned independent hate crime review.

Hate expression is often manifested in flags, posters, or banners being placed on lampposts or other public property for the purposes of sectarian or racist intimidation from housing. It also includes intimidatory graffiti that can be sectarian, racist, or homophobic. The issue has been starkly highlighted recently with posters being placed in certain areas threatening landlords if housing is rented to migrants.

We continued to critique the policing and broader public authority response to hate expression, which is largely grounded in non-intervention due to the paramilitary threat that often lies behind the display of such items. Our concern is that the present approach gives little to no weight to the harms of such expression on targeted victims. We presented our research to the Policing Board and the PSNI agreed to review their internal policy on the matter. We have also been involved in a series of challenges on specific incidents.



The Equality Coalition's seminar on preventing misogynistic crime. Pictured are keynote speaker Baroness Helena Kennedy (centre), with event Chair, Patricia McKeown, Co-Convener of the Equality Coalition and UNISON Regional Secretary (left) and outgoing Justice Minister, Naomi Long MLA (right).



Participants in an expert roundtable on combatting racial profiling in law enforcement, organised by CAJ and ICCL.

A fair and humane immigration system

CAJ continued a range of interventions in our post-Brexit immigration work to seek to tackle structural racism and promote the rights of migrant communities in Northern Ireland and the border area.

We were particularly pleased to secure a five year 'backbone' grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, which allowed us to mainstream our former immigration and Brexit project into our core work. In the face of rapid regressive changes in UK immigration law and policy, CAJ continues to advocate for a fair and human rights compliant immigration regime.

Common Travel Area (CTA) for all: Campaign with the North West Migrants Forum

We continued with a range of joint activity with the North West Migrant Forum (NWMF) as part of a campaign to end 'hard borders' for migrants living in the border area.

Key areas of work have included seeking to end selective passport checks involving racial profiling (across the land border and also on routes from Northern Ireland to Britain); and seeking reform in relation to the hard border faced by visa nationals. Our work directly contributed to a broad range of print and broadcast media outlets highlighting these issues.

With the support of our partners in Public Interest Litigation Support (PILS), we obtained an independent legal opinion on elements of the Irish Immigration law that impact cross border checks and used this as a basis for further high level engagement with the Irish authorities.

CAJ, alongside NWMF, gave oral evidence to an inquiry into the CTA coordinated by the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA), which includes members from both the UK Houses of Parliament and the Houses of the Oireachtas (see www.britishirish.org for more information). The inquiry was chaired by Senator Emer Currie. Our concerns regarding visa nationals were strongly reflected in the inquiry's recommendations.

CAJ's work on this issue was also referenced in the March 2023 research report by the Economic and Social Research Institute, *Comparing Migrant Integration in Ireland and Northern Ireland*.

We met NIO Minister of State, Steve Baker MP, in the NWMF offices in Derry in July 2023. Mr Baker took part in a panel discussion with NWMF and CAJ, which also included input from members of the audience, who provided lived experience testimony on the CTA and other racial justice issues.

To formalise and grow our partnership with NWMF, we secured joint funding for three years from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for a shared post to sustain and expand this joint work.



Senator Emer Currie (second left), who led the CTA inquiry, pictured with Councillor Lilian Seenoi Barr (first left), CAJ Director Daniel Holder (first right), and CAJ Immigration Solicitor Una Boyd (second right).



Meeting with Minister of State Steve Baker in the NWMF offices in Derry.



Daniel Holder (CAJ) speaking at the NWMF townhall meeting on 'The Common Travel Area; Rights, Limitations, Opportunities'.



The political panel at the town hall event, featuring Shane O Curry, the Irish Network Against Racism; Paul Murphy TD; Senator Emer Currie; and Martin Kenny TD.

'Illegal Migration Act'

CAJ carried out a rapid response to the publication of the UK 'illegal immigration bill', with a particular focus on the unique impacts of the bill's draconian provisions on the land border, despite its political rhetoric focusing on 'small boats'.

We raised concerns regarding the risks of racial profiling and arbitrary detention of persons moving across a land border invisible to most, including through briefing the media, political representatives, NGOs, and grassroots organisations. We worked with MPs and Peers to table probing amendments, leading to clear statements from Ministers for a potential exemption for land border crossings. We continue to raise the potential impact of this bill with UK, Irish, and EU representatives, advocating for an exemption. Our concerns regarding legal aid changes in NI resultant from the Bill were also raised in the UK Parliament.

CAJ was part of the UK wide civil society response to the Illegal Migration Act, providing input on the unique impacts of this legislation in NI. We were also part of an NI-specific response, including a joint statement from NI civic society calling for the bill to be scrapped. CAJ is now engaging with the NIHRC on their legal challenge to the Act.

Model Hostile Environment (Northern Ireland) Repeal Bill:

In 2022, CAJ published our legal research report, *Can Stormont Rollback the Home Office 'Hostile Environment'*, available here: www.caj.org.uk/publications/reports/can-stormont-rollback-the-home-office-hostile-environment-legal-research-report).

This report contained a legal analysis from Counsel and a blueprint for how the NI Assembly could legislate, in areas of devolved competence, to roll back elements of the UK Home Offices 'hostile environment'. The hostile environment refers to the suite of policies introduced under the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts designed to make public services crudely 'police' migration, which have led to widespread racial discrimination, including the Windrush scandal. Much of the hostile environment relates to areas of devolved competence across the UK such as housing, health, driving, the regulation of marriage, and, in Northern Ireland specifically, social security and employment rights. Following the report, the second stage of the project has involved CAJ working with Counsel and a legislative draftsman during 2023 to develop a model 'Hostile Environment Repeal Bill', which could be taken up by the NI Assembly on its restitution. This work has been supported by Unbound Philanthropy.

Electronic Travel Authorisation

We achieved a significant victory over the UK Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) scheme which risked hardening the land border for (non-Irish / British) non-visa nationals and furthering racial profiling. Following our original political and media intervention, this issue became a high level political issue between Ireland and the UK, including at the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. This ultimately led to the UK Government agreeing to exempt residents of the Republic of Ireland from the scheme.

Access to Justice

CAJ continues to work on a wide range of issues linked to access to justice and in particular, access to immigration legal advice services and legal aid provision in NI. CAJ works regularly with the Immigration Law Practitioners Association (ILPA) and NI Immigration Practitioners Group.

Frontier Workers

CAJ continues to raise concerns about the implementation of the Frontier Worker scheme in NI and the impacts for the rights of cross border EU workers. We continue to work collaboratively with Border People and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) on the implementation of the Frontier Worker Permit scheme in NI in relation to the land border. This has focused on drawing out data, including through parliamentary questions; joint work with journalists; and engagement the post-Brexit Independent Monitoring Authority on citizens' rights. Following several refusals by the Home Office to provide data on applications for frontier working in NI, we have made a submission to the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) on this issue. CAJ spoke at the launch of research on 'Frontier Workers and their Families', held by the NI Human Rights Commission in October 2023.



The launch of new NIHRC research on 'Frontier Workers and their Families'. Pictured from L to R is Alyson Kilpatrick, NIHRC; Sylvia De Mars; Charlotte O'Brien; Annmarie O'Kane, Border People; and Úna Boyd, CAJ.

Increased equality

Equality and socio-economic rights have long been a priority area for CAJ.

Since 1996, much of this work has been undertaken through the vehicle of the Equality Coalition, a network of NGOs and trade unions dedicated to advancing equality in NI, which is co-convened by CAJ and the public sector trade union UNISON. The Equality Coalition has

over 100 members, a number of which are themselves umbrella groups, including several leading trade unions. There has been, and remains, no other collective voice on equality in Northern Ireland, consistently seeking to promote equality of opportunity for all people. There is also no other overarching, consistent 'critical friend' of the equality oversight bodies, public authorities, and local Government.

The Equality Coalition's three strategic areas of focus for 2023 are:

1. Protecting economic, social, and workers' rights in Northern Ireland during the cost of living crisis.
2. GFA@25: Campaigning for the protection and implementation of the rights and equality provisions of the peace settlement (including harnessing CAJ's previous mapping exercise and the Coalition's 'Policy Asks 2022' document).
3. Countering hate crime, intimidation, and hate expression.

CAJ and the Equality Coalition maintained a high level of activity throughout this year with programme support from the UNISON campaign fund. This has included organising well-attended monthly members' meetings, often with a specific thematic focus. These meetings drive collective action, encourage information sharing, and foster solidarity between members of the Coalition.

Our work in this area has also included a programme of seminars held through the Equality Coalition, including a seminar on digital rights; a special 'chill factor' seminar to mark the 25th anniversary of the GFA, which focused on the intimidation still faced by NI civil society; and

two 'constitutional conversations' seminars held in partnership with the Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) at Ulster University, with support from the LSE Gender Justice and Security Hub. The latter two seminars focused (respectively) on frameworks that could be used to protect minority and women's rights within a reformed Stormont and a future united Ireland following a 'yes' vote in a referendum held under the GFA.

We also held major events on misogyny and the criminal law (reported on above) and on the (still missing) NI anti-poverty strategy.

Anti-poverty seminar – 'Progressing an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland'

This was a joint event held on 28 June in Stormont, organised through the Equality Coalition in collaboration with NIAPN, Barnardo's NI, and UNISON but led primarily by CAJ.

At the seminar, NGOs, trade unions, and academics called for an anti-poverty strategy based on objective need to be a day one priority for the next NI Executive. The over-subscribed event was Sponsored by Emma Sheerin MLA and Co-Sponsored by Mike Nesbitt MLA; Sinead McLaughlin MLA; Gerry Carrol MLA; and Kate Nicholl MLA. It was attended by representatives of the majority of NI Executive departments, including Department for Communities (DfC), which has overall responsibility for addressing poverty. The seminar received widespread media coverage in NI, amplifying its message. This event put the anti-poverty strategy firmly on the political agenda, as well highlighting the threat of litigation should a strategy not be expeditiously adopted by an incoming Executive.

NI has been waiting for an anti-poverty strategy for almost 20 years following a commitment in the 2006 St Andrews Agreement and accompanying legislation – it has been a focus for the Equality Coalition throughout this time and will continue to be so until an effective strategy is delivered.



View of the audience.



Panel 1, from left to right, Patricia McKeown, UNISON; Bernadette McAliskey, STEP NI; Goretti Horgan, UU; and Pauline Leeson, CiNI.



Group shot of some of the expert speakers who contributed to the event.



Event organisers, from left to right, John Patrick Clayton, UNISON; Becca Bor, NIAPN; Trása Canavn, Barnardo's NI; and Robyn Scott, CAJ.



The 'Women's Rights' panel at the joint Equality Coalition and TJI seminar on 'How could minority and women's rights be protected in a United Ireland?'.

Digital rights

As referenced above, we held an Equality Coalition seminar with renowned global privacy rights expert Dr Johnny Ryan, ICCL, as keynote speaker in UNISON in May.

This was followed by training for Equality Coalition members in November with the *Rabble Collective*. This focused on digital safety and best practice for civil society organisations.

Equality Interventions

CAJ and the Equality Coalition intervened in a number of strategic issues – including the equality proofing of the Northern Ireland budget; rural GP funding cuts; competency testing restructuring, leading to an ECNI investigation; and the NI Executive Covid Recovery plan.

We also made a range of equalities interventions on Irish language rights issues, with particular reference to peace process commitments. This is reported on in more detail in an earlier section of this report. CAJ issued a detailed critique, of a draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIAs) issued by Belfast City Council into bilingual signage on leisure facilities that we considered was part of a much broader problem of EQIAs being used not to measure discriminatory detriment, as intended, but rather to measure political opposition. This can mean EQIAs thus become a political veto rather than a rights-based safeguard.

Gender policy

CAJ has a particular focus on gender policy and engages in regular collaboration with the women's sector in NI, sometimes through the Equality Coalition, sometimes through direct engagement with women's sector organisations.

Several members of the CAJ team are highly involved in the Women's Policy Group (WPG). During 2023, CAJ made direct contributions to a number of WPG submissions and briefings, including their submission to the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) consultation and their response to a call for evidence on 'the challenges faced by woman human rights defenders working in conflict, post-conflict or crisis-affected settings' issued by the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders.

CAJ supported the WPG-led 'Where's our democracy?' campaign while it was in its early stages by sharing our research on how the implementation of rights-based safeguards could help make Stormont functional. We continue to support the campaign and have been represented at a number of recent 'Where's our democracy?' events. Through the WPG, we have also been directly involved in campaigns supporting gender budgeting and in assisting other members of the group in scrutinising EQIAs, including those produced on the 2023 departmental budget allocations. Members of the WPG are regularly invited to speak about their work at Equality Coalition meetings.

In addition to this, members of the CAJ team are also directly involved in a number of other external working groups with a focus on women's rights and feminist activism, including the Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group (NIWBG) and the All Party Group on Early Education and Childcare.

International solidarity

Whilst our primary focus is on Northern Ireland, CAJ has both international reach and is engaged in a numerous two-way international solidarity actions with counterpart human rights organisations in Europe and beyond.

This has included sharing the lessons from the Northern Ireland peace process with other jurisdictions, including speaking about relative success in areas such as policing and justice reform, as well as highlighting limitations and ongoing issues. In particular, in 2023, we have sought and benefited from support from our international networks and partners in internationalising opposition to the UK legacy bill.

CAJ remains an active member of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) an international human rights NGO federating 188 organisations from 116 countries. We also were active in the Strasbourg-based European Implementation Network (EIN), who work for the full and timely implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and serve as a hub for European civil society organisations across the Council of Europe region. Twice during the last year, we have presented to representatives of the Committee of Ministers and engaged with the broader Council of Europe structures in relation to the UK legacy bill, influencing and informing subsequent Decisions and Interim Resolutions by the Committee of Ministers into the Northern Ireland cases.

CAJ has also been an NGO partner in two academic collaboration projects:

- **LSE Gender, Justice and Security Hub:** CAJ are NGO partners in this hub led by the Centre for Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics (LSE). We are engaged in a project alongside Ulster University's Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) and Queen's University Belfast School of Law. The hub focuses on seven focus countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, and Uganda. CAJ's role has focused on equality and socio-economic rights. In July 2023, we attended a hub convention in Colombia, briefing on the current situation regarding women's reproductive rights in NI. This year, we also completed a case study into the CAJ-Unison Equality Coalition for the hub. See www.thegenderhub.com for more information on the hub and its work.
- **Getting on with it: Understanding the Micro-Dynamics of Post-Accord Intergroup Social Relations, in communities in Colombia, Lebanon and Northern Ireland:** CAJ are also NGO partners in this peacebuilding research project led by the University of Bristol. In 2023, CAJ hosted and facilitated the field researchers to finalise a series of interviews and participated in an expert roundtable in Bristol to further the research. CAJ has presented primarily on common issues relating to legacy; the state response to the continuing actions of armed groups; and the conflict management model. See: www.gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FV013432%2F1.



CAJ Director Daniel Holder with European Implementation Network (EIN) Director Loulietta Bisiouli and representatives of EIN member groups from Hungary, Greece, and Bulgaria. Photo Credit EIN.

CAJ participated in the Council of Europe shadow Civil Society Summit in the Hague during February and March 23. Pictured, responding to the summit, is Olga Sadovskaya (moderator); Bjørn Berge, CoE Deputy Secretary General; Tiny Kox, PACE President; and Martin Eyjólfsson, Permanent Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland.



Panel discussion at the December 2022 EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights – which focused on Stopping Impunity.



Robyn Scott, CAJ Communications and Equality Coordinator, pictured at a workshop held in Colombia as part of the Gender, Justice and Security Hub convention. Photo credit: LSE.



Rooftop terrace, Universidad de los Andes.



Mural, Museo de Arte y Memoria de Mampujan.

CAJ actively participated, by invitation, in a number of other international initiatives including:

- 24th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights: Stop Impunity, Brussels (December 2022): We participated this forum with over 100 NGOs from elsewhere outside the EU on the recommendation of FIDH in the context of the UK legacy bill given the focus on impunity.
- Civil Society-UN Counter terrorism Engagement Mechanism Regional Consultation, Paris (organised by the Global Centre on Cooperative Security and Rights and Security International in February 2023): This Chatham-House expert round table attended by around 30 civil society reps from the regions of Europe and MENA (Middle East north Africa).
- Engagement with Colombian transitional justice delegation, Belfast (February 2023): CAJ briefed a visiting high-level Colombian transitional justice delegation on Northern Ireland's experience of transitional justice mechanisms experience, organised by Notre Dame University.
- The Council of Europe Civil Society Summit (CSS) in The Hague (28 February - 1 March 2023): This was a shadow civil society summit organised by CURE and the Conference of INGOs in Europe in advance of the Council of Europe's Reykjavik summit in May. The shadow summit produced a declaration on Council of Europe Reform, and statements on Ukraine and Turkey. The declaration is available here: www.cure-campaign.org/wp-content/uploads/CSSDeclarationFinal.pdf. We presented a statement on the UK legacy bill alongside Georgia (foreign influence laws).
- Briefing session to UNSR on freedom of assembly, Geneva (12 Feb 23) and video message: The UN Special Procedures on freedom of assembly, Clement Voule, produced a series of six video messages from NGOs on the need to end repression against protestors and activists, including a video with CAJ focusing on the NI experience of regulating parades and protests. Other contributions were from Brazil, Nigeria, Pakistan, Colombia, Chile, and Sri Lanka. You can watch the videos here: www.freeassemblyandassociation.net/accountability.
- CAJ were speakers in a webinar in July with the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP), an influential New York Based organization on the peace process.

CAJ also endorsed a range of petitions and joint actions through FIDH on international situations. In October, in collaboration with UNISON, we also organised an open letter to the UK Government and Parliament on the situation in Gaza, which was signed by NI civil society organisations and individuals We have also engaged with our Israeli and Palestinian counterpart NGOs through FIDH.

Communications

During 2023 - the first year free of any lockdown restrictions since the pandemic began - we shifted our communications to put a renewed focus on in-person engagement.

We held events throughout the year, including a seminar on impunity and the UK legacy bill, two joint 'constitutional conversations' seminars with the Transitional Justice Institute (TJI), a policing conference, and training sessions on digital rights. Where possible, these events were hybrid – allowing people to join online as well as in-person to maximise participation and accessibility. Hundreds of people have attended events organised or co-organised by us during 2023.

Our new (modernised) website launched at the end of 2022. Since then, it has been viewed almost 40,000 times by over 9,000 visitors, with more than 2,200 file downloads taking place. We plan to do a review of the website content at the start of next year to ensure everything stays up to date!

Midway through the year, we conducted a full review of our Communications Procedures and updated this material accordingly. We continued to streamline our policies and processes to make sure we are being as efficient as possible in all our outward facing work. In October, we commissioned the Rabble Collective to conduct an audit of the software and online tools we are using to identify safe 'open source' alternatives.

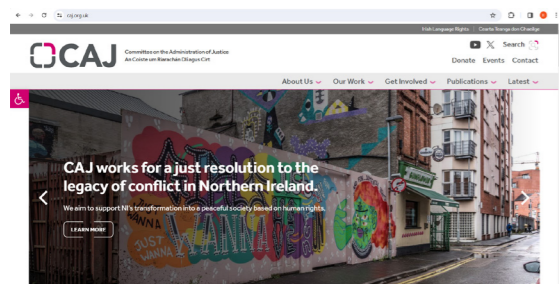
We published five issues of Just News, including two special editions, one to mark the retirement of Brian Gormally from the role of CAJ Director and another on the 'chill factor' still experienced by activists and academics in NI. You can read all of our 2023 issues here:

www.caj.org.uk/publication_type/our-newsletter

We also sent out our ezine, Just Updates, on (roughly) monthly basis - if you'd like to receive this direct to your inbox, you can sign up here: bit.ly/JustUpdatesSignUp

CAJ received regular media coverage throughout 2023, particularly in relation to our work on immigration, the anti-poverty strategy, and the UK legacy bill (now the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023). Our online engagement continues to be strong, and we have increased our overall follower count on both of our Twitter accounts, despite major changes to the platform, which is now known as 'X'.

We continue to make every effort to be fully compliant with GDPR. If you would like to find out more about how we keep your data secure, please refer to our Privacy Policy, which is available from our website. You can also request a copy of this policy by emailing robyn@caj.org.uk



Our Funders

CAJ is supported by the Human Rights Fund – a dedicated fund managed by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, designed to support CAJ and the three other organisations in the Human Rights Partnership (the Human Rights Consortium, Participation and the Practice of Rights, and Public Interest Litigation Support).

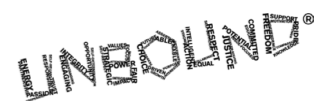
CAJ is also very grateful for the support of:

- AB Charitable Trust
- Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
- Community Foundation for Ireland
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- Legal Education Foundation
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Unbound Philanthropy
- UNISON Campaign Fund

CAJ has also raised funds through Local Giving and would like to thank everyone who has made a donation.

You can find our Local Giving page here: www.localgiving.org/charity/caj

A full set of audited accounts is available to members on request. Email info@caj.org.uk





The CAJ team with former Director Brian Gormally at his retirement party.

Staffing and Executive

Staff

Daniel Holder, Director (from April 23, previously Deputy Director)
Brian Gormally, Director (until April 23)
Gemma McKeown, Solicitor
Úna Boyd, Immigration Project Coordinator & Solicitor

Roisin Brennan, Office and Finance Manager
Eliza Browning, Policy Officer
Robyn Scott, Communications & Equality Coalition Coordinator

Executive

Anna Bryson, Chairperson
Rory O'Connell, Treasurer
Fionnuala Ni Aolain, Editor of Just News
Louise Mallinder, Vice Chair
Cathy Bollaert
Anurag Deb

Kieran McEvoy
Dáire McGill
Ciarán Ó Maoláin
Anne Smith
John Topping (until May 2023)



Reports and Submissions

CAJ Reports

- No. 75 **The Road to the Northern Ireland Troubles (Reconciliation and Legacy) Act 2023 -**
A narrative compendium of CAJ submissions, Nov 23

Joint Reports

- Police Reform in both Jurisdictions: Learning from the Past and Planning for the Future - Conference report, June 23 (with ICCL)

Equality Coalition Reports

- No. 76 **Progressing an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland** - Report on a half day seminar held in Parliament Buildings, Stormont, on 28 June 2023, Dec 23

Submissions

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| S565 | Submission from CAJ to CESCR on the List of Issues for the UK, Jan 23 | S572 | Addendum Rule 9 Submission to the Committee of Ministers McKerr group v. the United Kingdom, May 23 |
| S566 | Written Evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry into 'The effectiveness of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement': Political vetoes or objective safeguards?, Jan 23 | S573 | Briefing on the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill - House of Lords Report Stage, Government Amendments, June 2023 |
| S567 | Submission to the Committee of Ministers from the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in relation to the supervision of the cases concerning the actions of the security forces in Northern Ireland, Jan 23 | S574 | Equality Coalition, Barnardo's NI, NIAPN joint briefing note - Progressing an anti-poverty strategy for Northern Ireland, June 23 |
| S568 | Briefing Note - The Illegal Migration Bill, Impacts on the land border, Mar 23 | S575 | Briefing Note - The Illegal Migration Act: Impacts on the land border, July 2023 |
| S569 | Submission to Independent Commission on UK Public Health Emergency Powers, Mar 23 | S576 | Submission to the Committee of Ministers from the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in relation to the supervision of the cases concerning the actions of the security forces in Northern Ireland, July 23 |
| S570 | Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) update and FAQ, Apr 23 | S577 | CAJ briefing note: Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), Sept 2023 |
| S571 | Briefing Note - The Illegal Migration Bill, Impacts on the land border (updated version), May 23 | S578 | Submission to Belfast City Council draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) of proposed policy on 'Proposal to Erect Bilingual External Naming and Internal Directional Signage at Olympia Leisure Centre', Sept 23 |
| S572 | Submission to the Committee of Ministers from the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) in relation to the supervision of the cases concerning the actions of the security forces in Northern Ireland, May 23 | S579 | Briefing note: Key points raised by Equality Coalition members on 'The NI budget and cuts to civil society', Oct 23 |



CAJ

Committee on the Administration of Justice

Promoting Justice / Protecting Rights

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) Ltd
1st Floor, Community House
Citylink Business Park
6A Albert Street
Belfast
BT12 4HQ

 028 9031 6000  info@caj.org.uk

 www.caj.org.uk  @CAJNi

ISBN 978-1-873285-18-3