

Coalition Against Hate Crime welcomes Seanad passage of Hate Crime Bill (<https://www.activelink.ie/node/111592>)

The Coalition Against Hate Crime, a group of 23 civil society groups representing communities commonly targeted by hate crime, welcomes the passing in the Seanad of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Bill 2024.

The passage of this Bill has been a long time in the making. Communities have campaigned for hate crime legislation for years, while international and European human rights bodies have called on the government to fill the existing legislative gap. Meanwhile, Irish society has become ever more divided, and we have witnessed increasing intolerance, hostility and violence towards our communities.

We are now one step closer to having hate crime legislation, which will send a clear message that this behaviour is not tolerated in Ireland and recognise the additional harm these crimes have on individuals and impacted communities.

Hate crime legislation will ensure that the criminal justice system can identify and address hate crimes in a clear and consistent way. But the Coalition believes that much more needs to be done in support of it, including enhanced training for criminal justice actors, improved reporting, better monitoring and data collection, enhanced victim supports, and public awareness campaigns on the legislation and the specific nature and impact of hate crime. Ultimately, we should all be working towards preventing hate crime from happening in the first place, including through education and awareness raising.

Martin Collins, Co-Director, Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, said:

"Our communities have been victims of both hate speech and hate crime for many years. A hate crime doesn't affect just one person, it can make an entire community feel excluded, unsafe and afraid.

"We welcome the passage of the Hate Crime Bill which sends a clear message that crime motivated by racism and hatred against Travellers, Roma, and other minorities will not be tolerated. Next steps need to ensure that extreme Hate Speech legislation is revisited and passed, as Hate Speech and Hate Crime are intrinsically linked."

Moninne Griffith, CEO, Belong To, said:

"Research published by Trinity College Dublin and Belong To, 'Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland', highlights the extent of the LGBTQI+ community's lived experience of hate crime. 1 in 4 members of Ireland's LGBTQI+ community have been punched, hit or physically attacked due to being LGBTQI+, and 72% have experienced verbal abuse due to being LGBTQI+.

"Hate crimes are message crimes – a single act can cause a ripple of fear throughout the victim's community. 45% of LGBTQI+ people in Ireland feel unsafe holding hands with a same-sex partner in public, and over half of trans and non-binary people feel unsafe expressing their gender identity in public. This Bill is an important step towards tackling hate crime in our society and looking forward, we now need to ensure that there is effective legislation to tackle extreme hate speech."

Brian Killoran, CEO, Immigrant Council of Ireland, said:

"Ireland is a diverse country, and those who have chosen here as their new home have a right to protection and safety in their lives. Encroaching anti-migrant sentiment has an impact on those communities – it dehumanises them, and belittles their enormous contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of this country.

"People who experience highly damaging and corrosive racial abuse must be protected within the law. For that reason we welcome the progression of this legislation, and impress upon our political establishment to commit to also address the hate speech elements of the legislative reform as a matter of continued urgency."

Progress on tackling hate cannot leave extreme hate speech behind. These issues are interlinked and EU commitments, which the government cannot sidestep, require changes to our existing legislation. As a Coalition, we will continue to campaign for effective legislation to counter extreme hate speech, and for a much wider approach to understand and tackle hate in Ireland.

Region

Nationwide

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