



Irish Council for
Civil Liberties

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Monitoring Civil and Political Rights in Ireland



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What?

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is an international human rights treaty, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1966, which sets out an extensive list of rights. These include the right to life; freedom from torture, serious harm and inhuman treatment; the right to liberty and security; the right for detained persons to be treated with humanity and the right to a fair trial.

When Governments sign the ICCPR they are required to comply with certain conditions and report on the progress made in improving respect for civil and political rights. This progress is monitored by the UN Human Rights Committee, a group of eighteen international experts.

Why?

Ireland signed the ICCPR in 1973, ratified it in 1989 and was first examined by the UN Human Rights Committee in 1993 and again in 2000. The Irish Government produced a report detailing its compliance with the ICCPR for use during each of these examinations.

The UN Human Rights Committee invites non governmental organisations (NGOs) to submit their own independent reports and to lobby the Committee to highlight areas where Ireland is failing to meet its human rights obligations.

Many of the concerns previously raised by NGOs were reflected in the recommendations in the UN Committees first and second reports on Ireland under the ICCPR, showing the extent to which the Committee relies on the advice of NGOs.

Who?

The Irish Government is due to submit its third report to the UN Human Rights Committee in the coming months. A coalition of three NGOs, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) and the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) have come together to submit one joint report to the UN Committee.

How?

As part of this process, an ICCPR researcher will carry out research with groups representing different communities in Irish society to find out their key concerns about civil and political rights. This gives participants the opportunity to identify gaps and to focus on specific issues.

Key stakeholders will also be interviewed to assess relevant areas of their work with regard to the ICCPR. Each Article of the ICCPR will be assessed on issues which have arisen and possible developments since Ireland's last examination. Once this research is completed ICCL, FLAC and the IPRT will organise a consultation meeting to allow other NGOs to submit their feedback. The research and feedback will be included in the groups' joint report to the UN Human Rights Committee.

Finally, representatives from the three groups will meet and lobby UN Human Rights Committee members at Ireland's third examination (due to take place in Geneva). This will allow the groups to fully explain the human rights situation in Ireland and suggest questions which UN Committee members might ask the Irish Government.

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About the Groups:



THE IRISH COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES (ICCL)

Is an independent human rights watchdog, which monitors, educates and campaigns in order to secure full enjoyment of human rights for everyone. The ICCL is involved in advocacy for positive changes in the area of human rights and monitoring policy and legislation to make sure that it complies with international standards. The ICCL also publishes reports and runs campaigns to raise public and political awareness of human rights, justice and equality issues.



FLAC - FREE LEGAL ADVICE CENTRES

Is an independent human rights organisation dedicated to the realisation of equal access to justice for all. It campaigns through advocacy, strategic litigation and authoritative analysis for the eradication of social and economic exclusion. FLAC offers information and referral over the telephone and free legal advice at local centres throughout the country. FLAC's areas of work include: credit and debt law; social welfare; public interest/human rights; comprehensive civil legal aid and access to the courts/ to justice.



IRISH PENAL REFORM TRUST (IPRT)

Is a NGO campaigning for the rights of people in prison and the progressive reform of Irish penal policy. The IPRT's work is based on the belief that the Irish Prison Service must meet or exceed international best practice and human rights standards, and that Ireland must reduce the overuse of incarceration by addressing the social inequality at the root of much criminal behaviour, and through the implementation of effective non-custodial sanctions and restorative justice programmes.