

Violent attacks on asylum seekers in Dublin, Ireland continue

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Recent incidents point to the ongoing victimisation of asylum seekers by the Irish authorities and the far right. Saturday afternoon, August 31, a Jordanian asylum seeker was assaulted by a group of stick-wielding thugs at a property in Ormond Quay, Dublin.

The man, who requested anonymity when he spoke to the *Irish Times*, said he needed 18 stitches to his head and had feared for his life during the attack. Another man was reportedly attacked with a fire extinguisher. Videos available online show a group of thugs who, having forced their way into the building, pushed asylum seekers onto the street and chucked their possessions out of an upstairs window.

The attack took place at a vacant building that had been squatted over the summer by housing activists who then offered shelter to some of the hundreds of homeless asylum seekers sleeping rough in Dublin.

The evening before, thugs mobilised by the landlord had also forced entry. Online coverage shows terrified asylum seekers trapped in the building while goons battered on the doors. The assault on Friday triggered a major police operation with the Garda's Armed Support Unit and Public Order Unit attending. No one appears to have been charged.

Another asylum seeker, a 41-year-old from Gaza, said there was a racial element to the attack and one of the goons had threatened to kill everyone inside. He said Saturday's incident, in broad daylight, was particularly shocking since it took place during a pro-Palestine demonstration in the city. Pointing to police collusion in the assault, he said there were "police everywhere", nevertheless "people without masks, without anything, came and wanted to kill the people [inside the building]."

The Ormond Quay thuggery comes after months of increasing pressure on asylum seekers with the Fine Gael/Fianna Fáil/Green government and the far right working in tandem.

Government victimisation of asylum seekers

As of mid-August, the Garda National Immigration Bureau,

on behalf of the Irish coalition government, had issued more deportation orders to asylum seekers in the previous eight months than the total issued over the whole of last year. To date, 1,100 deportation orders have been issued in 2024, compared with 948 over 2023. Enforced deportations have increased by 128 percent, while so-called voluntary returns have also increased by 157 percent.

Besides increasing deportations, the government is intent on making life as difficult as possible for some of the most vulnerable, and visibly exposed, members of society. It has for months been seeking to displace some hundreds of asylum seekers forced to sleep rough on the streets and parks of Dublin into distant and unsuitable areas of land and large buildings that could be "repurposed."

Coolock protests

A particular focus has been the Coolock area—a large housing estate to the northwest of Dublin where a former Crown Paints factory on the Malahide Road has been designated by the government as suitable to house hundreds of asylum seekers.

Up to 500 Ukrainians under international protection are to be forced to live in what is currently an empty, largely windowless shell. Should it ever open as an asylum camp, it will inevitably place a tremendous additional burden on local social, health and education facilities already stretched by the endless cost-cutting of successive Irish governments.

The Coolock site has been targeted repeatedly for arson attacks and protests. On July 20, for example, a fire broke out in the former factory's foyer after a protest attended by as many as 500 people. This followed several days of skirmishes orchestrated by far-right and anti-Muslim groups such as "Coolock Says No". It was also addressed by far-right councillors, including the National Party's Patrick Quinlan and Glen Moore of the equally right-wing Irish Freedom Party (IFP).

Both parties, formed in the last decade, are virulently anti-migrant, socially conservative, anti-abortion, anti-vaccination

outfits while both wave the Irish tricolour. IFP leader Herman Kelly is a former press officer of Reform UK's Nigel Farage, while the National Party is currently led by former Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association leader James Reynolds. Reynolds replaced Justin Barret, a Holocaust denier and Hitler admirer, after Barrett turned up to an anti-immigration protest wearing a Nazi uniform.

Coolock is an industrial area, with a significant number of factories taking advantage of a large and cheap labour force and easy access to Dublin airport. Wages for a factory worker in the area start at €13-14 an hour. House prices are astronomical. The cheapest three-bedroom house in the area will cost €300,000.

There are pockets of particularly extreme deprivation too. In neighbouring Darndale, some areas record unemployment figures of as high as 30 percent, while 59 percent of children are in single-parent families.

The absence of any perspective from the ruling parties, Sinn Féin or the trade unions to alleviate this social crisis creates an environment in which the fascists can grow.

The same day as one of the Coolock protests, on July 15, 16 asylum seekers forced to live in tents on the banks of the Royal Canal in Phibsborough, Dublin were attacked by masked men. Two days later another group of asylum seekers were attacked on the City Quay by a group of seven or eight brandishing knives. On August 1, another group of 11 men from Palestine and Jordan were forced to move their tents by police from Herbert's Park in South Dublin. The asylum seekers were told to move, but not where to go. Another group under international protection were reportedly harassed, beaten and "threatened with death" in a shopping centre.

Another "repurposed" area is around the former St Brigid's nursing home in Crooksling, South Dublin, which is being used by the misnamed Department of Integration to contain as many as 540 people. Asylum seekers, all men, are forced to live in tents holding 10 to 12 people, without electricity or heating, and with a questionable supply of clean water. Meals can only be had after queuing outside in the rain. Showers, toilets and mobile phone charge points are all inadequate, according to residents, while privacy is more or less nonexistent.

Both asylum seekers and local residents complain that the bus service to central Dublin is now completely inadequate. Another 450 asylum seekers have been dumped in the grounds of the former Central Mental Hospital in Dundrum where they are living in tents. 200 more are in a former seminary in nearby Milltown, South Dublin.

High Court ruling

The government was found last month to have breached the European Union's human rights charter in its treatment of

asylum seekers.

In a High Court ruling on a judicial review brought by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), Justice Barry O'Donnell found that the state's "response to the needs of IP [international protection] applicants is inadequate to the point that the rights of this class of person... have been breached by the State" because a "failure to provide for the basic needs of applicants amounts to a breach of their right to human dignity."

The case arose from the government's decision last December that it would no longer offer accommodation to men seeking international protection. Instead, male asylum seekers were given vouchers worth €75, later increased to €113, weekly on which to survive. Many ended up on the streets, living in tents. The ruling noted that the State had not provided any analysis of "real world purchasing power" or "how in fact an... applicant was expected to access the basic need of housing." In consequence, "those persons are left in a deeply vulnerable and frightening position that undermines their human dignity."

The ruling committed the Irish government to nothing, however. Justice O'Donnell rejected the IHREC request for an order to force the government to establish a system to uphold the fundamental rights of all IP applicants as "not appropriate or necessary". Further, O'Donnell opined that "policing a mandatory remedy framed in such general terms would present real difficulties and give rise to scope for serious disputes about what amounted to compliance."

In other words, the ruling was not going to be mandatory, because the learned judge fully expected the government to ignore it.

The defence of asylum seekers and immigrants is of decisive importance to the working class. Hundreds of thousands of workers and young people have mobilised against the Gaza genocide over the past year. This mass movement and the broadest layers of working people must immediately take up the defence of all those fleeing the consequences of imperialist barbarism, poverty and climate change worldwide and fight for the construction of a mass international socialist movement against war and austerity.



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