

In 2019, the Imam (or worship leader) of a mosque was woken in the middle of the night by a phone call. He heard a man's voice telling him that there was a group of people who did not want Muslims in Ireland and that they were planning an attack on his mosque.

The Imam saw the call as a clear warning of an upcoming attack, and he reported it to An Garda Síochána.

In late July, the Imam's mosque in Galway was vandalized. Several windows were smashed, the Imam's office was wrecked, and the video surveillance system was destroyed.

The guards treated it as a burglary, but the Muslim community saw the incident for what it truly was, a targeted and premediated hate crime.

So what exactly is Hate Crime!?

A hate crime is a criminal act of violence or hostility directed at someone because of who they are, or who someone thinks they are.

Hate crimes are signal crimes which is any criminal incident that causes change in the public's behaviour and/or beliefs about their security. They are intended to send a message to the victim, and to other people like them, that they are not safe.

Victims of hate crime are made to feel afraid for the future, not just for themselves but for their friends, their loved ones, and their children. This type of fear can lead to anger, and to a more divided society where whole communities can feel unsafe.

Hate crimes are motivated by prejudice, hatred or bias and can be due to someone's:

- skin colour,
- nationality,
- religion,
- ethnicity,
- sexuality,
- gender identity or disability.

Let's talk about some examples...

For instance, if someone is attacked because they are, or they are perceived to be, gay this is a hate crime.

Hate crimes can be carried out by; verbal abuse, obscene/offensive calls, text, mail or emails, assault, harassment, criminal damage, arson, manslaughter, murder.

You can experience a hate crime both in-person and online.

It is important to recognise that certain comments which are used to appear as a compliment, or a joke actually contain hidden insults about specific groups in our society.

Joking with your friends 'that's so gay!' is not actually funny.....

While commenting on the English spoken by a different nationality 'your English is actually so good!' is not the compliment you might think it is.

In order to combat discrimination and prejudice, phrases like these must be removed from our vocabulary.



Hate Crime

Ireland's current position surrounding legislation

Ireland does not currently have any specific legislation to deal with hate crime. The only legislation in Ireland that deals with hate-based offences is the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.

However, someone found guilty of hate crimes can face a maximum of **two years in prison and a fine of €10,000**.

In April 2021, Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee TD published the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Hate Crime) Bill 2021.

The Bill will consider and deal with existing criminal offences as more serious than before, where those offences are motivated by prejudice against a protected characteristic.

In March 2022, the Irish government held debates for a decision on the bill. The legislation is expected to be enacted this year.



Why is it so important to have legislation against hate crime in Ireland?

To protect minority groups

Everyone has a right to live safely and to participate fully, without fear, in all aspects of life. Having hate crime legislation makes a strong statement that we value an inclusive society where crimes committed on the basis of a victim's identity are not tolerated.

Hate crime legislation works

In other countries, such as England and Wales (which have a common law legal system just like Ireland!) hate crime legislation is effective in bringing people who commit hate crimes to justice, preventing others from committing them and restoring community confidence in the state.

To make the State take racism seriously

In 2019, 251 incidents of hate crime were reported by An Garda Síochána while in 2021 the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) recorded 404 incidents meeting the criteria for racist hate crime. Having hate crime legislation in place will help ensure that hate crimes are recorded and taken seriously.

We need to send a clear message that discrimination and hate have no place in our communities and that our society should be inclusive to all.

The silence surrounding hate crime must be broken, people must be encouraged to report it and we must find effective ways to address all forms of racism and prejudice. New legislation can help to achieve that.

