

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Inquiry into Hate crime and its violent consequences



Written evidence from the Institute of Race Relations

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1. The Institute of Race Relations (IRR) was established as an independent educational charity in 1958 to carry out research, publish and collect resources on race relations throughout the world. Today, the IRR is at the cutting edge of the research and analysis that inform the struggle for racial justice in Britain, Europe and internationally. It seeks to reflect the experiences of those who suffer racial oppression and draws its perspectives from the most vulnerable in society.
2. The IRR's reputation is built on its investigations and analyses into pressing issues of contemporary British racism. These investigations have covered such areas as racism and the press, police racism, exclusions from school, deaths in custody, the plight of asylum seekers, racial violence, the impact of anti-terrorist legislation and attacks on multiculturalism. The IRR also conducts research on racism in other European countries, examining the rise of racial violence and extreme-right parties, asylum and immigration policies, human rights violations, policing and security policies and the 'integration debate'.
3. The brief submission that follows focuses on the upturn in hate crimes following the outcome of the EU referendum on 23 June 2016. It draws on cases in one month (between 24 June and 24 July 2016), from IRR's database (established in 2010) which collates and analyses racist incidents reported by local and national media in the UK. Given that this database relies primarily on media-reported racial violence, we do not claim that its output is representative of the actual number of incidents that take place, or of the totality of 'types' of incidents that take place. Nonetheless, it is a key resource, which allows for analysis of incidents by a number of variables - including date, type of attack (for example, physical assault, racist abuse, criminal damage etc.), location, motivation (for example, attacks on mosques or synagogues, attacks by members of far-right groups, attacks specifically against a particular ethnic or religious group) and so on. Thus it provides, as well as a simple count of occurrence, a source of qualitative information that is probably not available anywhere else. And it also

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allows for the monitoring of the criminal justice system's response to racially motivated hate crimes as a case is followed up through investigation to prosecution.

4. Whilst not addressing all aspects of the terms of reference for this inquiry, this submission does address issues linked to the fifth term of reference: that which looks at statistical trends in hate crime. This is an interim report from the IRR on post-referendum hate crimes. A more comprehensive report will be published in the autumn. The findings presented here should also be set alongside *Post-referendum racism and the importance of social activism*¹, a report published in July by three social media platforms which contained analysis of 645 racist and xenophobic incidents reported using Facebook and Twitter. The IRR contributed to this report and concur with its findings, as well as those of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which stress that many prominent politicians should share the blame for the upsurge of xenophobia and intimidation following the referendum.² But we would also contend (and the cases we are monitoring support this) that the 'insider-outsider' messages projected by the Home Office's 'hostile environment' policy for irregular migrants have also played not a small part in the deteriorating climate in the UK. As we state below, the most common insult thrown at the victims of hate crime was 'Go Home'. This cannot but bring to mind the Home Office's 'Go Home' vans.

Overview

5. In the month following the EU referendum result – between 24 June and 23 July 2016 - the IRR recorded 134 racially motivated incidents on its database, a figure which was roughly six-times higher than during the corresponding time-period last year. (Just 21 cases were logged by us between 24 June and 23 July 2015). The majority of the 134 cases occurred in England (84%), nine (7%) of attacks took place in Northern Ireland, there were eight in Wales (6%) and four in Scotland (3%). In terms of regions in the UK, the highest number of incidents occurred in the Greater London area (26). Attacks in the other regions are listed in descending order: North West (17), South East (16), South West (14), East England (12), West Midlands (11), Northern Ireland (9), Scotland (7), Yorkshire and the Humber (7), Wales (8), North East (5), East Midlands (2).
6. It is not uncommon for spikes in racially motivated violence to be evident after certain events, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the July 2005 London

¹ *Post-referendum racism and the importance of social activism* is available to download [here](#).

² CERD's *Concluding observations on the twenty-first to twenty-third periodic reports of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* is available to download, [here](#).

bombings.³ However, whilst such increases are usually directed at the Muslim community, the upturn of violence following the EU referendum was, according to our findings, 'diverse', combining predominantly (but not exclusively) Islamophobia, anti-black and anti-migrant and anti-foreigner attacks. Twenty-eight of the victims of the attacks which occurred over this one-month period were European (the majority of whom were from eastern Europe); in 30 cases the victim was identified as Muslim and in 9 cases as Asian; 21 victims were 'Black' and 3 were Chinese. Three anti-Semitic attacks were also recorded, and in 14 cases there were multiple victims, of multiple ethnicities and nationalities. (In the remaining cases, the ethnicity and nationality of the victims was unknown.)

7. 101 of the 134 cases involved some level of interpersonal abuse, of which around half referred either specifically to the EU referendum, or the themes which were made integral to it. The most common forms of abuse made reference to 'going home', going 'back to where [the victim] came from' and 'getting out of [the perpetrator's] country'. Incidents overwhelmingly took place in public spaces - on the street, on public transport and in restaurants, takeaways and in shops. Fifty-two attacks took place on the street/public place; there were 16 attacks in shops; 12 in bars/restaurants/cafes/takeaways; 12 on public transport; 8 attacks on or in mosques and 8 on people in their homes. We also recorded 10 incidents via social media.
8. In 25 cases, the victim was physically assaulted. All of these attacks were accompanied by racist abuse, and in 13 cases, the victim sustained injuries. These included substantial bruising to the body, black eyes, and fractured cheek bones. In one incident, the victim was stabbed. In a further 29 cases we recorded, there were reports of property damage ranging from smashed windows and graffiti, in two cases, arson. In some cases these examples of property damage were accompanied by physical threats if the victim did not leave the country.
9. In 91 cases, the perpetrators were white, although it should be noted that in 40 cases the ethnicity of the perpetrator was unknown. Eleven of the incidents recorded by the IRR involved the far Right. In the days following the vote, two demonstrations were held which reportedly involved supports of the English Defence League; one in Newcastle (which called for repatriation) and one outside a Midlands mosque. Racist National Action stickers have been found in Glasgow and Cathay, Wales. Numerous swastikas have been daubed on buildings, cars and on a memorial to Michael Foot, a former leader of the Labour Party.
10. In conclusion, the victims of the attacks have come from all communities and from the very young to the very old, with children and older people being abused

³ See for example articles on IRR News: '[The anti-Muslim backlash begins](#)' (14 July 2005) and '[The racist backlash to the London bombings continues](#)' (11 August 2005).

at bus stops and as cars pass them on the street. In that sense, there has been a return to old school racism, the racism of the '70s and '80s with the most common insult being 'Go home'. White people have even been attacked for looking Polish/Muslim. And people who have been here for many years and/or were born here have suffered racial abuse for what they report as the first time.

11. As previously mentioned, this submission is part of a wider study into post-referendum racism to be published in the autumn. Our intention is to examine the statistical data above within the broader framework of national police statistics as well as statistics provided by other research and monitoring agencies. We also intend to examine the police performance nationally, which interim findings, gleaned from Freedom of Information requests of different police forces, suggest has been patchy. On the positive side, some of the cases we are examining also demonstrate a clear counter- surge in support and solidarity *with* the victims of racist hate crimes, and particular attention will be paid to capturing the lessons learned by community action to create a welcome (as opposed to a hostile) environment.