



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

30 July 2008

Press release: Immediate

UN urges greater protection for women's rights in Northern Ireland

The UK Government needs to improve the protection of human rights for women in Northern Ireland, according to a report issued by the United Nations Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) yesterday (29 July 2008). Issues of concern raised in the report include increasing support for victims of trafficking and sexual violence and improving services available for Northern Ireland's female prisoners. The report details the United Nations examination of the UK on progress in protecting and promoting women's rights. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's reported to the Committee on 10 July on the current state of women's rights in Northern Ireland, highlighting its concerns.

NIHRC Chief Commissioner Professor Monica McWilliams commented:

"We welcome the United Nations Committee's recommendations to the UK Government and hope that action will now be taken to improve services and levels of support available for women in Northern Ireland. In particular the Commission welcomes the Committee's call on government to improve support for victims of trafficking and sexual violence here."

The Committee urged the UK Government to continue to take all appropriate measures to combat all forms of trafficking involving women and children and to provide adequate support services to victims.

In addition the Committee called for improvements to services for women in prison and recommended that government take further measures to enhance educational and rehabilitative facilities in addition to ensuring the provision of adequate health facilities, including mental health services.

Professor McWilliams added:

"This Commission has consistently called on government to create a discrete, separate, self contained facility for female prisoners in Northern Ireland. This call has now been repeated by the United Nations Committee, who have urged the UK Government to take further steps towards the establishment of separate women's facilities in Northern Ireland prisons."

Ends

Further information

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Notes to editors

1. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was established in 1999, by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to protect and promote the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. The powers and functions of the Commission include reviewing law and practice, advising the government, promoting an awareness of human rights and taking cases to court.
2. The Commission's full submission to the United Nations CEDAW Committee is available [here](#).
3. The full text of the CEDAW Committee's recommendations to the UK Government is available [here](#).
4. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is accredited with 'A' status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI), and is at present the only accredited NHRI in the UK.
5. The 41st session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women took place on 30 June to 18 July 2008 in New York.

