

“YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON THE BILL OF RIGHTS”

SUMMARY

Submission 294
Amnesty International NI Youth Report

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400 young people across Northern Ireland gave their views to Amnesty International about what they want in the new Bill of Rights. Schools across the country Catholic, Protestant and Integrated have been involved. The report shows that the vast majority of young people (11 – 18 years old) want a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The report contains three major points expressed by young people: **the Right to Protection from Bullying, the Right to be taught Human Rights Education in all schools and the Right to Free University Education.**

MAIN FINDINGS

- 97% of young people say YES! to a Bill of Rights for N Ireland.
- The Right to protection from **Bullying**. This was a recurring theme throughout the survey. 98% of those questioned wanted protection from the bullies. This focused around schools implementing proper policies to deal with bullying and for the schools to be held legally responsible if they didn't supply this fundamental service.
- The Right to **Free University Education**. This was felt to be an important part of young people's development through to the working world. It was felt that many young people in NI could not afford to go to university since the introduction of fees.
- The Right to be taught **Human Rights Education** in schools. Young people felt that it is vitally important to be taught about human rights to learn to respect each other and celebrate differences. It is also pointed out that young people need to learn about what their rights are and the responsibilities that go with them and learn about the new Bill of Rights.

KEY FINDINGS

Along with these three major points, young people felt the following rights were also very important:

1. Right to Free Speech
2. Right to Life
3. Right to Peace
4. Right to Equality
5. Right to Practice your Religion
6. Right to an Education
7. Right to Health
8. Right to Freedom
9. Right to Freedom from Fear and the Right to your own Beliefs
10. Right to a Fair Trial

SOME COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS INTERVIEWED

“It is a long time coming” Coleraine High School, student, Age 16.

“I feel that the Bill of Rights is an excellent thing as it offers everyone entitlements to various rights” Coleraine High School, student, Age 14.

“It’s important for all humans to be equal” Coleraine High School, student, Age 14.

“Freedom to be able to live without the hatred of racism and sectarianism”, St Patrick’s Grammar, student, Age 11.

“It must respect all cultures in N.Ireland and give equal opportunities to each individual” St. Patrick’s Grammar Armagh, student, Age 14.

“The bill of rights is the best thing to happen to Ireland because the troubles are worse than ever and people are losing security without a Bill of Rights” St Patrick’s Grammar Armagh, student, Age 13.

“Voting should be lowered to 16” Oakgrove College, student, Age 16.

USEFUL FACTS ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- Young people make up 36.9% of the population of NI. NI has a higher rate of child poverty than the UK average.
- Students in Further Education Colleges have a shortfall of £2344 per year.
- The Human Rights Commission has been asked to draw up a Bill of Rights that will ‘reflect the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland’ (according to the Good Friday Agreement. For children and young people some of these particular circumstances include the following:
 - 37% of children live in poverty
 - 26% of all victims of the conflict have been killed by plastic/rubber bullets during the conflict
 - out of 2342 children being looked after, the majority are in foster care
 - 3.5% of children are living with a disability.
- Statistics on young people gained from Youth Council for Northern Ireland Barometer 2001 and NIHRC.

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AI REPORT'S MAIN FINDINGS

