



May 2008

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## Insufficient knowledge about the impact of Taser

Response to the PSNI's draft Equality Impact Assessment

Photo credit: [jasonsbain](#) (Flickr)



This week (1 May) the Commission took the opportunity to respond to the findings of the draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the PSNI's proposals to introduce Taser in Northern Ireland. We have consistently expressed grave concern at the fact that the decision to acquire and introduce Taser was made

prior to this consultation

exercise. Most unfortunate, was the decision made by PSNI to deploy Taser in January 2008, after only a two-day training programme. In making our response we drew particular attention to the following human rights standards:

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),

The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

We highlighted the fact that since its previous response to the PSNI, a UN Treaty body has expressed concern that Taser X26 could constitute inhuman and degrading treatment in violation of Article 16, CAT and that, in extreme cases, it may amount to torture in violation of Article 1, CAT. The Commission is also extremely disappointed that the proposals do not prohibit Taser use against children and young people. The available evidence suggests that children are at potentially greater risk from the cardiac effects of Taser currents, raising serious concerns under Article 2, ECHR and Article 6, CRC (right to life). In addition, using Taser is not in keeping with the best interests' principle in Article 3, CRC.

The Commission believes at present that there is still insufficient knowledge about the impact of Taser to support its use in Northern Ireland and, in particular, there is not enough information and research available to understand or to mitigate the adverse effects of Taser for each of the different equality groups. You can read our full response [here](#).

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## Protection of rights central to Agreement

10th anniversary of historic agreement

On 10 April, the 10th anniversary of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, we issued a press statement highlighting the important human rights components of this multi-party agreement. A comprehensive set of rights and safeguards was established by the Agreement and many of these have now been taken forward. Read the full statement [here](#).

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## Legislation and policy update

ID cards for foreign nationals

We have sent a response to the Home Office consultation on the introduction of [Compulsory ID Cards for Foreign Nationals](#). View all our [consultation and briefing papers](#).

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## Watch the Bill of Rights event podcasts

Video podcasts on our social networking pages

In the April edition of the e-Newsletter, we reported on the Bill of Rights Forum presentation of its recommendations to the Commission. You can now view the video podcasts of the event on our [Facebook](#), [Bebo](#), and [YouTube](#) pages.

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## Your views

Survey of stakeholders 2007

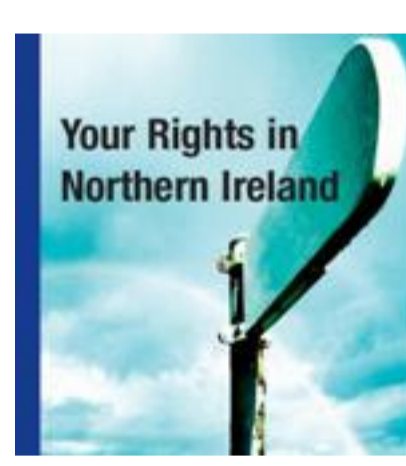
During December 2007 and January 2008, we carried out a postal survey of 120 stakeholders to seek views about our work and general impressions about the Commission. You can read the survey results [here](#). Don't forget you can give us your [feedback](#) at anytime.

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## New publications

Advice guide for migrant workers

On International Workers Day, (1 May 2008) the Commission, in partnership with Law Centre (NI), launched the second edition of a series of invaluable guides to help migrant workers secure their rights in Northern Ireland.



Your Rights in Northern Ireland: A Guide for Migrant Workers provides information to assist migrant workers in understanding their rights and entitlements

on a range of issues including housing, employment, education and social protection.

These updates (2nd editions) include information arising from changes in policy and practice since the guides were first produced in 2006. Click [here](#) for the updates in English (language translations available soon) and read the press statement [here](#).

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## International news

New convention to combat discrimination

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – the first human rights treaty of the 21st Century – will come into force on 3 May, following its ratification by the required twenty countries. To date some 126 countries have signed the Convention since 30 March 2007, with 71 also signing the Optional Protocol.

The Convention aims to combat discrimination in relation to a wide range of rights, including the right to education, health, work, adequate living conditions, freedom of movement and freedom from exploitation. It also recognises the capacity of people with disabilities to make decisions for themselves. The Optional Protocol, which allows individuals and groups to petition an international expert body, will also become legally binding from 3 May. At the national level, human rights commissions have an important role, set out in Article 33 of the Convention, to promote, protect and monitor the rights of people with disabilities. More information is available on the United Nations website [here](#).

The Commission attended the 20th Session of the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (ICC), which was held in Geneva from 14-18 April 2008. The primary focus of the conference was to agree on ways of strengthening the ICC through the development of a new legal and governance framework that would enhance its status and ability to engage more effectively within the UN Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

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ICC meeting of NHRIs

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## Vacancies

Policy Worker and Administrative Officer

The Commission is currently recruiting for a [Policy Worker](#) (temporary, part-time) and an [Administrative Officer](#) (maternity cover). Applications are invited by 1.00pm on 16 May 2008.

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## Feedback

Tell us what you think

The Commission works hard to provide the best possible service and we welcome your feedback on this e-Newsletter. If you would like to comment on any aspect of our work, write to us at the address below or [contact us](#) on our website. We look forward to hearing your views. If you need to make a complaint about a human rights violation please read our [FAQ](#).

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