

Dublin riots highlight far-right threat in Europe amid deep social crisis

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Riots in Dublin Thursday night highlighted the growing threat of the far-right in Ireland and internationally.

These forces are gaining confidence under conditions in which the ruling class is increasingly using migrants as a scapegoat for their own savaging of workers' living standards.

Roughly 500 people were involved, setting fire to a tram and two buses, and looting 13 shops, leading to the largest deployment of riot police in the country's history. Eleven police vehicles were damaged, close to 50 officers injured and 48 people arrested.

The violence was whipped up by far-right agitators over the stabbing of a woman and three children earlier that day, reportedly by a foreign national. Sources have told the BBC the man under suspicion is an Irish citizen in his late 40s who has lived in the country for 20 years. There are indications he was suffering a psychotic episode after being recently diagnosed with a brain tumour. A Brazilian delivery driver, Caio Benicio, helped to disarm him.

At 5.22 p.m., a voice message was sent by user "Kill All Immigrants" to the Telegram channel Enough is Enough urging, "Bally [balaclava] up, tool up. And any ... fucking foreigner... just kill them. Just fucking kill them. Let's get this on the news."

The same day, Irish mixed martial arts fighter Conor McGregor had tweeted to his 10 million followers, in response to the stabbing, "We are not backing down, we are only warming up. There will be no backing down until real change is implemented for the safety of our nation. We are not losing any more of our woman [sic] and children to sick and twisted people who should not even be in Ireland in the first place."

He had tweeted the day before after a series of posts denouncing Taoiseach (prime minister) Leo Varadkar

for encouraging migrants to register to vote, "Ireland, we are at war."

British fascist leaders Paul Golding, head of Britain First, and Tommy Robinson, the former leader of the English Defence League, were quick to congratulate McGregor. Robinson posted that he was "so happy Conor is standing up for the people of Ireland." Golding called on him to organise "a 'Freedom March' in Dublin."

Events like this in Ireland, where the far-right has had a negligible political presence in recent decades, underscore the global scope of the far-right movement being incubated and actively promoted by the bourgeoisie. They follow a period of rising, low-level agitation, intimidation and violence by far-right organisations, most prominently the Irish National Party and Irish Freedom Party.

Groups of extreme nationalists, white supremacists, religious fundamentalists, anti-vaccine campaigners and COVID denialists come together around opposition to immigration and to a "weak" and "woke" establishment—in fact only magnifying the anti-migrant rhetoric of that same establishment. Over 300 anti-immigration protests were held in Ireland in 2022, and another 169 in the first six months of 2023.

The picture of migration to Ireland has changed substantially in the last 20 years, from a minor phenomenon to the point where 20 percent of the current population was born abroad. The number of asylum seekers has climbed from 7,500 in 2021 to 74,000 this year—most of them Ukrainians.

Far-right forces have scapegoated these migrants for a social crisis which has raged since the 2008 financial crash, with the government legitimising many of their claims.

On the Sunday before the riot, Varadkar told the

RTÉ's *The Week in Politics* that although "migration is a good thing for Ireland," the country "needs to slow the flow" and be "realistic" about the support offered.

"When it comes to irregular migration, that's people coming from Ukraine or people seeking international protection, I think one of the things we have to do when we have to be honest with each other about this, is to make sure that what we offer—in terms of accommodation, in terms of work, in terms of money—is similar to what's offered in other EU countries."

The social crisis for which migrants are blamed, including those seeking asylum due to the predatory wars provoked the imperialist powers, grows more severe by the day, courtesy of a ruling class concerned only with its own enrichment.

Speaking about the popular discontent being exploited by the far-right, CEO of the Immigrant Council Brian Killoran referred to "several crises gripping Ireland, including a housing emergency and crumbling health services, traced back to the 2008 recession and the period of austerity that followed," reported *Euronews*.

This January, the Irish Medical Association warned, "Our public health services are in an endless cycle of crisis. Too few doctors, too few beds and too few healthcare professionals. We are simply not investing enough in recruiting staff and increasing capacity to meet the needs of patients. This is leading to dangerous waiting times for treatment and unprecedented levels of burnout amongst doctors."

In August, figures were reported by the *Irish Examiner* showing over 127,000 hospital procedures had been cancelled or postponed in the first six months of the year, 24,000 of them in relation to child patients.

In March, Varadkar admitted a housing deficit of 250,000 homes. There are 12,000 people homeless—among them 1,400 asylum seekers made homeless since January, says the Irish Refugee Council.

According to the Banking & Payments Federation Ireland (BPFI), average rents increased 82 percent in the 12 years 2010-2022, versus a European Union average of 18 percent; house prices increased 55 percent. The BPFI's report notes that, in the same period, Ireland's population increased by over half a million people while housing output grew by just 130,000 units.

Ann-Marie O'Reilly, representing tenants' aid organization Threshold, told *Le Monde* this July how "successive governments abandoned backing for social housing..

With asylum seekers disproportionately housed in the most deprived and under-service areas—frequently in hotels, old office blocks and sports halls—the far-right twists and manipulates legitimate social grievances.

While they remain a fringe force in Irish politics, examples from Europe—where parties like the Alternative for Germany, Brothers of Italy, the French National Rally, the Dutch Party for Freedom and the Sweden Democrats have built a steady constituency of 10-20 percent of voters and exercise an outsized influence on national politics—is a warning.

The only answer to this ethnic nationalist response to social crisis—demonising working-class migrants—is a socialist response, aimed at mobilising the working class to expropriate the wealth hoarded by the multimillionaires and billionaires. The far right can be combatted only to the degree that an international socialist struggle is taken up against all the capitalist parties in Ireland and throughout Europe, whose pro-war, pro-business policies are the real cause of social hardship.



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