

# Far-right stoke anti-migrant riot in Dublin

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In what is an increasingly familiar pattern, an alleged sexual assault by a failed asylum seeker in Dublin, Ireland, was last week seized on as pretext for far-right agitators to call for mass violence against asylum seekers and migrants. At one point, during three nights of protests and confrontations with police, as many as 1,000 demonstrators besieged the CityWest Hotel in the village of Saggart, outside Dublin.

According to Irish broadcaster RTE, the first mention of an incident at the large CityWest Hotel was a post, Monday morning at 8.25 a.m., on X noting crime scene tape at the site. This post was viewed as many as 136,000 times. By early afternoon media reports stated that a man had already been arrested for an alleged assault on a young girl.

CityWest has been the focus of protests led by right-wing forces since earlier this year when news of the government's intention to buy the hotel—which it been leasing since 2020—was made public. In June, 100 or so local residents protested the site's transformation into a permanent asylum centre, at one point slowing down traffic on a nearby motorway. Some 8,000 signatures were also collected testifying, in part, to real concerns about pressure on local facilities. The site was finally purchased over the summer for €148 million from Tetrarch Capital.

A local protest was called for Monday evening outside the CityWest, which went ahead peacefully, with 200 attending. A journalist's post that the alleged victim was a child in the care of the Irish state's Child and Family Agency (Tusla) was then viewed 1.2 million times.

Later on Monday evening, various far-right agitators and groups took to their mobile phones and laptops. These included Dublin City Councillor Malachy Steenson, formerly a left republican; Paul Nolan, jailed last month for identifying asylum seekers; and Sinne na Daoine, a group of anti-migrant vigilantes who carry

out "community patrols". Nolan called for CityWest "to be stormed, and every last migrant deported." Some of these posts were shared and amplified by right-wing commentators worldwide, including billionaire fascist Elon Musk and Tommy Robinson, founder of the English Defence League.

Next morning, the deluge of filth continued. UK based online anti-immigrant outlet UNN posted, "Republic of Ireland set to erupt. Can you blame them?" The far-right National Party called for people to attend a protest that evening. US based "American patriot" Don Keith posted "this is how you get your country back".

Crowds began to gather around CityWest from 6.30 p.m., as did riot police. Over the next few hours, around 1,000 far-right protestors chanted "Get them out", directed fireworks at riot police, pushed through crowd control barriers and threw stones and traffic cones at police vans before one van was eventually set on fire. Masked men turned up on horseback, horse drawn traps and motorbikes. Much of this was livestreamed by far-right and anti-migrant activists, including some who flew in for the occasion. These included UK based BB Audits, who films protests outside UK asylum hostel and Canadian Ezra Levant of far-right Rebel News. US fascist Jack Posobiec reposted videos from the protests to his 3 million followers.

One livestreamer was, according to the *Irish Times*, Keith O'Brien aka Keith Woods. In 2023 Woods was a speaker at a white supremacist conference organised by American Renaissance. Another was Phillip Dywyer who claimed that CityWest was being "turned into... a state sponsored trafficking centre."

Smaller protests were held on Wednesday and Thursday evening. In total 24 people were arrested and 17 charged with public order offences. A copycat attack on housing for people seeking international protection took place on Thursday night, with stones and

fireworks thrown at a property in central Dublin.

For those inside the CityWest complex, which provides accommodation for around 2,400 asylum seekers and Ukrainian refugees, the experience was terrifying. Residents were effectively curfewed by the riots, advised over WhatsApp by volunteers at the complex to be back before 6.30pm before the Tuesday protest.

One man from Pakistan, Samir, said he could hear a crowd shouting as they walked by the avenue to the hotel. By 7.30pm this had become the roar of 1,000 people confronting a riot squad. Samir was worried for the safety of some of his friends who were still outside. They were eventually escorted to a nearby safe house. Samir praised the work of local volunteers who picked up centre residents in their cars and took them to a house nearby where they stayed until 1.00am when they could return to CityWest. “It was a frightening, dark night,” he said.

The CityWest complex, a 6.7 hectare site which includes a transit hub, has been leased by the Irish government since 2020. Since 2022 it has been used as accommodation for Ukrainians and people seeking International Protection. Some 1,200 Ukrainians still live there, including 350 families with children and older Ukrainians, many with complex health needs. Anatoliy Primakov, director of Ukrainian Action in Ireland said, “Families were told not to leave their rooms, not to go near windows; they were terrified. And they don’t know how long this is going to last”.

The complex also houses pregnant asylum seekers transported to CityWest from other asylum centres because of their health needs. 58 women have given birth in CityWest this year.

One health professional told the *Times* that the complex “is certainly the place with the highest concentration of people with complex health needs. 20 - 25 percent of people in the hotel have two or more chronic health conditions.” She reported threats against health workers from right wing goons. “We have had staff members attacked by right wing groups, vandalising our cars.”

The protests and riot outside CityWest are only the latest in a series of increasingly violent attacks on migrants and their accommodation in both the North and South of Ireland.

Earlier this year, Ballymena in the North saw five

successive nights of anti-migrant protests, riots and firebomb attacks which resulted in houses being set on fire and families being forced to leave their homes. Both Romanians and Filipino families were targeted by protests orchestrated by loyalist paramilitary groups.

Protests and petrol bomb attacks were also reported in Larne, Portadown and Coleraine. This year’s notorious July 11 loyalist bonfires saw one topped by life-sized mannequins wearing life jackets in a small boat, while below it were placards saying, “Stop the boats” and “Veterans before refugees”.

Last year, a former paint factory in Coolock, Dublin was the site of repeated protests against government proposals to it into accommodation for hundreds of migrants. The factory was repeatedly firebombed and this May the government abandoned efforts to repurpose the site. There were numerous attacks on individuals and small groups of migrants in the city centre.



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