



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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6 November 2015

All-island approach to prostitution is required

Political leadership is needed now to stop our communities being used as safe havens by those criminal gangs pocketing millions through violence, exploitation and abuse.

When senior gardaí testified before the Oireachtas Justice Committee two years ago they were clear about the links between Irish prostitution and criminal gangs both foreign and domestic.

The issues involved have been examined and re-examined over and over again during a four-year Government review of the law, an investigation by the Justice Committee which ended with unanimous backing for sex buyer laws as well as multiple media investigations showing that thugs run prostitution.

It is surely time for the targeting of demand for prostitution and sex trafficking to become a reality here too.

If the Government is really serious about tackling crime, it must cut off this trade with a follow the money approach and bankrupt the millionaire pimps behind it.

Source: Irish Examiner

12 November 2015

Meeting of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland leaders cancelled

A cross-border meeting of political leaders from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has been cancelled to enable further talks to save powersharing at Stormont.

The scheduled **North South** Ministerial Council (NSMC) discussions in Armagh on Friday involving ministers from both administrations have been postponed as intensive political negotiations continue in Belfast to strike an as yet elusive deal.

Northern Ireland's First Minister Peter Robinson, Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, Irish premier Enda Kenny and deputy prime minister (Tánaiste) Joan Burton had all been set to attend the meeting, but the Stormont leaders are now staying in Belfast.

At the weekend, Taoiseach Mr Kenny raised hopes of an imminent resolution to the crisis engulfing the Northern Ireland administration when he predicted a settlement "within days". However, consensus has yet to emerge.

Mr Robinson and Mr McGuinness were locked in exchanges with the UK and Irish governments throughout this afternoon.

Officials from all sides were due to continue talks into tonight.

Among the issues standing in the way of an agreement is the level of additional funding the governments are willing to commit to the region.

Nationalist and republican concerns around the British government's position on potentially withholding some information, on national security grounds, from new Troubles truth recovery mechanisms have also to be resolved.

Details of new cross-border crime fighting initiatives to tackle the ongoing scourge of paramilitarism have not been fully hammered out either.

Ireland's minister for foreign affairs Charlie Flanagan, who has been involved throughout the nine week talks process, said he would be back round the negotiating table at Stormont House on Friday.

"Encouraging and steady progress continues to be made in the political talks at Stormont," he said.

Mr Flanagan added: "I encourage all the parties to continue their positive engagement in this important process and remain hopeful that a positive outcome can be achieved."

Powersharing in Northern Ireland has stumbled from one crisis to another in recent times, the latest sparked by a murder linked to the supposedly defunct Provisional IRA.

The fallout from the shooting of former IRA man Kevin McGuigan and a range of other disputes creating instability, in particular an acute budget crisis, are on the agenda in the talks.

A resolution to the long-standing impasse over the Executive's failure to implement the UK Government's welfare reforms in Northern Ireland will be crucial to any breakthrough.

A spokesman from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister said the NSMC meeting had been "postponed to allow the political talks which are at an advanced stage to reach a conclusion".

Source: Belfast Telegraph

13 November 2015

Republic regularly using ambulances from Northern Ireland for 999 calls

Ambulances from Northern Ireland are "regularly" being used to assist 999 calls in the Republic sparking concerns services are being "stretched to the limit", it has been claimed.

A Sinn Fein councillor has claimed that on one recent occasion ambulances from Northern Ireland were requested to deal with five incidents in Louth in one day.

A **cross-border** protocol exists between Northern Ireland and the Republic for the two services to support each other during major emergencies and provide "mutual aid".

But concerns have been raised that a shortage of ambulances in the south has led to the Republic "begging" the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) to respond to more calls.

The National Ambulance Service (NAS) in the south has said that "it is not possible to state how many times NI Ambulance Service were requested to assist NAS".

But Louth councillor Tomas Sharkey said he believed there has been a "spike" in the number of calls made in recent weeks for Northern Ireland crews - in particular from the Dundalk area.

"We are begging off the Northern system who are being generous, but it is at the risk of the northern system being overstretched," the Sinn Fein councillor said.

"I am aware of a situation two weeks ago when the northern ambulance service were contacted on five occasions in the one day to come to Co Louth.

"A couple of years ago it was only when an escalated scenario happened - a serious car crash or major incident."

Mr Sharkey said that he did not know whether the calls were Category A - where there is, potentially, an immediate threat to life.

Former Health Minister Michael McGimpsey said he was worried the increasing use of **cross-border** ambulances could lead to escalating pressures on already stressed crews across Northern Ireland.

"We have a protocol that we support **cross-border** when there are major emergencies, but it wasn't designed to be a regular service because clearly our service is under extreme pressure. I would be concerned the resources are not going into the service to meet our own obligations in Northern Ireland let alone the Republic of Ireland," he said.

Figures from the NIAS reveal that in the last financial year - until April this year - crews responded to a total of 178,350 emergency calls of which 93 (0.05%) were to the Republic.

A further breakdown revealed 66 were in Donegal, 14 in Louth, six in Monaghan, five in Cavan and two in Leitrim.

It is unclear though how many calls have been made in recent weeks since April 2015.

The NIAS said that although major incidents are an "exception" to the daily running of the service, when they occur they can put "a significant strain on the resources of the service which has the responsibility to manage the incident".

In an NIAS statement, John McPoland explained there are two Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) which outlines the level of "mutual aid" that can be provided between the services.

He said: "As part of contingency planning to ensure that patients, particularly in the border areas, receive the quickest response to provide the highest levels of clinical care at their time of need, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and the HSE National Ambulance Service developed a MOU that would enable both services to work within their own procedures and clinical practice guidelines in the other's area of operation."

Mr McPoland said that major incidents are exceptions to the normal day-to-day business of the ambulance service.

"However, when they do occur they can put a significant strain on the resources of the service which has the responsibility to manage the incident," he added.

"In recent years, the major incidents include the fire at a ward block in Altnagelvin and the flooding of the Emergency Department at Letterkenny General Hospital. On these occasions the services were only too glad of the offers of help from their counterparts across the border."

Source: Belfast Telegraph