



Garda Representative Association

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Call For Mandatory Court Sentencing For Attacks on Gardaí

After Latest Figures Revealed By Dept. Of Justice

By Frank Thornton, President, The Garda Representative Association

IT has long been the belief of the GRA leadership that the Irish judicial system needs to get tougher on those who carry out attacks on our members while on duty.

In fact, we believe mandatory sentencing is long overdue to act as a real deterrent for those who initiate these assaults on all frontline emergency staff such as gardai, hospital, paramedic and our firefighting colleagues.

The statistics as revealed by the Department of Justice from the past five years reveal a telling insight to the reality of life on the frontline.

This week, in response to a Parliamentary question posed by TD Neale Richmond, Minister Heather Humphreys revealed that over 4,200 gardaí were assaulted while on duty over the past five years. And the trend of acceleration is even more alarming with the number of 700 assaults in 2016 rising to 1,096 last year, an increase of 57% in that time (see table below).

It has also been revealed that members have had to deal with over 45,000 public order offences countrywide during the Covid-19 pandemic, which gives a flavour to the many challenges we have faced over the past 18 months. These figures serve as a stark reminder of the treacherous job description that is modern day policing in Ireland.

We are trained to expect the unexpected. We often have to have thick skins when forced to endure abuse and disrespect. But no matter what the situation is that Gardai respond to, there is never an excuse for violent acts against our members and it's about time that court judgements adequately acknowledged this. There is no excuse for unprovoked assaults, as members of An Garda Síochána we are entitled to expect that we will return to our families after each day on duty in the same condition we left our families and homes in.

There have been many incidents of serious assaults on members of An Garda Síochána in recent years, resulting in horrific injuries, and in the most serious occasions, death. Between 40-50% of all injuries suffered by Gardai were as the result of an assault. The injury rate among other professions nationally here is on average 3.4%.

An assault on a Garda is a direct assault on our society and I believe must carry mandatory sentencing that matches the crime. Stricter sentencing for those who assault members of An Garda Síochána has always been an option open for the legislators, but has yet to be enacted.

As I said previously, I believe, if as a society, we want to retain an unarmed police force then we must protect members of An Garda Síochána through mandatory sentencing on all assaults on gardaí - and court penalties which adequately acknowledged this. Policing is a unique profession. Gardaí must carry out their duties, including enforcing legislation, arresting suspects, and protect the public effectively.

The number of such incidents reported per Garda Division is as follows:

Garda Division	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Cavan/Monaghan	28	20	38	29	34	30	21
Clare	16	18	11	10	**	14	11
Cork City	67	41	45	40	36	53	33
Cork North	30	34	38	22	44	34	27
Cork West	13	11	14	12	36	23	10
DMR Eastern	15	13	13	13	12	26	10
DMR North Central	35	28	34	53	65	86	29
DMR Northern	62	40	25	51	58	67	34
DMR South Central	31	22	27	30	52	73	43
DMR Southern	30	29	29	39	35	64	27
DMR Western	53	43	61	43	57	58	32

Donegal	19	32	37	33	32	47	35
Galway	25	20	32	34	32	65	24
Kerry	29	22	28	36	39	30	10
Kildare	26	10	14	20	17	26	19
Kilkenny/Carlow	33	38	12	18	32	27	22
Laois/Offaly	31	29	17	22	40	49	35
Limerick	32	24	18	25	23	28	14
Louth	26	40	23	38	33	42	29
Mayo	13	26	16	11	24	18	22
Meath	25	10	21	19	31	26	13
Roscommon/Longford	22	10	18	11	29	26	**
Sligo/Leitrim	15	13	15	15	25	26	16
Tipperary	47	40	60	64	32	30	32
Waterford	34	44	38	37	32	49	16
Westmeath	17	23	11	20	31	26	13
Wexford	13	17	24	11	21	29	14
Wicklow	30	**	16	**	19	24	17

*2021 YTD to 3 October