



Garda Representative Association

Floor 5, Phibsboro Tower, Dublin 7 Tel: (01) 830 3533   @gardarep  mail@gra.ie

Statement by Garda Representative Association

Interim General Secretary Mr Philip McAnenly (Oct 19, 2021):

The Garda Representative Association is now requesting an urgent meeting with the Garda Commissioner following his comments regarding the ongoing issue of the right of a member of An Garda Síochána to use discretion while dealing with the public.

When questioned by FF Clare TD Cathal Crowe on the right of gardai to use discretion at yesterday's Joint Policing Committee meeting in Ennis, Commissioner Harris stated the following:

“The difficulty is the difference between discretion and preference. I would say to every member of An Garda Síochána that properly exercising discretion is available to you, but make sure it is not preference. Preference is unfair – everyone must be treated equally before the law.”

This is a new departure from current guidelines and advice. The introduction of the phrase ‘preference’ in policing is unclear and wholly unacceptable and our members need immediate clarity on the Commissioner’s comments and his clear definition of the term ‘preference’ in relation to the use of garda discretion.

Our President, Frank Thornton, has already contacted Commissioner Harris last June requesting a meeting on these issues and related concerns and this request was declined by the Garda Commissioner.

We now believe that Commissioner Harris’ comments regarding somehow drawing the line between the use of discretion and ‘preference’ are vague, and has led to confusion among our members.

The GRA will not be commenting further on this matter until the Commissioner responds to this request.