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IPP Quashed After 14 Years: On 19 December 2023 the court of appeal quashed a sentence of imprisonment for public protection and, in the process, granted an extension of time of 14 years, for a man who had committed sexual offences when he was 19 years old. The Court replaced the IPP with an extended sentence which had the effect of leaving him a completely free man. Katy Thorne KC represented him. She was instructed by Correna Platt of Stephenson Solicitors. In granting the extension of time the Court referred to the impact that such a sentence and the lack of progress through the prison system has on a prisoners mental well-being. Practitioners will note the extraordinarily long delay before the appeal but take heart in the Court's willingness to entertain an appeal when justice so demands.

Head of Britain's Police Chiefs Says Force 'Institutionally Racist'

Vikram Dodd, Guardian: The leader of Britain's police chiefs' organisation has become the most senior serving leader to say that policing is institutionally racist, as he called for a fundamental redesign of national policies and practices to eliminate discrimination. Gavin Stephens, the chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), said black people should no longer experience disproportionate use of force, and that too little progress had been made to reform policing, with some leaders slow to accept the size of the challenge.

Stephens – elected by his fellow chief constables to lead their representative body – emphasised it was his personal view that discrimination in policing operated at an “institutional level”. In an interview with the Guardian, he said: “It’s a leadership responsibility for us to describe to them what it [institutional racism] means and what it doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean that all police officers are racist. The way our policies, procedures [and] training have been designed and implemented for many years have not had the voices of black people involved in the design, the implementation, of those practices. And as a consequence of that, we get disproportionate outcomes in places where there shouldn’t be disproportionate outcomes. The most helpful discussion for policing to have in the future is how we redesign the policies, the practices, the implementation, of policing to remove that discrimination.”

Stephens' remarks come as policing continues to wrestle with the issue of whether it should accept it suffers from institutional discrimination, a debate dating back more than 30 years. His intervention will add to pressure on the heads of England's biggest forces to adopt the idea – including the Metropolitan police commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley. Rowley refused to accept the terms “institutionally racist” and “institutionally misogynistic” after a damning report last year, with the Met commissioner claiming their meanings were unclear.

Those findings, by Louise Casey in March after the murder of Sarah Everard in 2021, were contained in the second report to find police to be institutionally racist. The first, by Sir William Macpherson in 1999, followed an inquiry into failings that allowed the racist killers of Stephen Lawrence to escape justice. Police leaders accepted the findings, then later claimed to have reformed the service to the extent that it no longer applied. Stephens said his personal view was that the reports were correct. He said: “The problems that we need to solve across policing are at the institutional level and they need institutional changes. Whether you look at the Macpherson definition in the Stephen Lawrence report, or whether you look at Louise

Casey's definition, my personal view is that they apply to policing.” Asked for clarity on whether his personal view was that “police are institutionally racist”, Stephens replied “yes”, while emphasising that his reasoning for reaching that conclusion was important.

Police chiefs debated whether to admit to institutional racism in 2022, with most being against making the admission. Police Scotland, the second biggest force in the UK, as well as Avon and Somerset police and the British Transport Police, have accepted that the term applies to them. But the biggest three forces in England – the Met, West Midlands police and Greater Manchester police – all disagree. Stephens said: “Colleagues have valid reasons why they don't want to go down that route.”

After the murder of George Floyd in the US and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, the NPCC promised reform and launched a race action plan – which critics say has done little or nothing after three years. Stephens said progress had been made, but that some of his fellow chiefs had been slow to accept the scale of the problems. “We have got some tangibles. I'd be the first to accept that we haven't made progress at the rate that we would want to,” he said. “To get acceptance of the scale of that challenge took longer than we'd anticipated.”

The NPCC chair said he personally supported the idea of police officers being licensed, in the same way nurses or doctors were. He believed it would help professionalise the service and hoped for an “active” debate on it among his fellow chiefs. Stephens became NPCC chair in March 2023, having previously been the chief constable of Surrey police.

The scale of the racial disparity in the use of force in England and Wales was laid out by police leaders in 2022, when they launched the first written version of their race plan. They wrote: “Black people are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people and five times more likely to be subjected to the use of force ... 10% of our recorded searches, 27% of use-of-force incidents and 35% of Taser incidents involved someone from a Black ethnic group. The latest estimates suggest that only 3.5% of the population is Black.”

Some have said that police stereotype black men as being more dangerous. Stephens, who grew up in Hartlepool, said this was wrong: “This myth that sometimes exists in popular culture that young black men are dangerous. It's a myth. Yes, young black men get involved in crime – yes, they're at risk of victimisation – but so do white men if you go to my neck of the woods.” He added: “If you've got that cultural connection, if you've got something in common with the person that you're dealing with on the street, there's a higher likelihood that you're going to be able to resolve that issue without resorting to use of force.”

Dublin Riots: Some Explanations and Responses

Juliana Sassi, a member of the Community Action Tenants Union (CATU), looks beyond simplistic explanations of the recent riots in Dublin to deeper causes, and explains how anti-racists and community campaigners have responded. On 23 November hundreds of people, mobilised through anti-migrant narratives on social media, took over Dublin's city centre, burning public transport and police cars and looting shops. They claimed to be protesting for the safety of their city and their kids, following a horrible incident in the afternoon, where a naturalised Irish citizen stabbed children in front of a school. How the rioters knew that the attacker was not born in Ireland has not been officially revealed. However, social media in Ireland was infested with racist propaganda, which was followed by a march to the capital to ‘hunt migrants’ in the evening.

Since then, two questions have been haunting social movements and political parties in Ireland. 1) How to make sense of what happened, and 2) How to respond to it. Understanding that the former

informs the latter, I will summarise here the main points and look at whether they contribute to a socialist strategy which can overcome divisions among the working class. From a rational perspective, as a migrant mother from the Global South, it is hard to be optimistic. However, I want to look beyond a moralising perspective which condemns riots as an attack on society, while not reducing them to purely an expression of the far-right's intentions to create scapegoats for capitalism's inequalities.

Competing Explanations: The state response has been a law-and-order approach, with the Minister of Justice Helen McEntee repeatedly referring to the Dublin rioters as 'scumbags' and 'thugs'. Fine Gael and Fianna Fail have taken the opportunity to demand more gardaí (Irish police), weapons, and surveillance technology such as facial recognition technology. However, this is controversial even for some government coalition members, as a tool that is invasive, often inaccurate and likely to reproduce racial bias.

Exactly who the 'thugs' are is something that progressive voices and the left are trying to (re) define, to make sense of the deeper problem we are facing. For many community organisers and community workers, those whom the minister and her party call thugs could be themselves, their friends and family who dress in a certain way or speak with a Dublin working-class accent. This stereotype is embedded in a process of the brutalisation of working-class communities over decades, which has led to their marginalisation. In this context, when services and opportunities are taken away from them no one cares to oppose it because 'the thugs' do not deserve better.

However, the ruling class division between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' also finds an echo among the working class, including migrant workers. Many anti-racists who have condemned the rioters have highlighted the fact that migrants are important to keep Ireland economically, working and paying taxes. The rioters, by contrast, were seen as 'spongers', people who live on social welfare and do not contribute to society, a marginalising stereotype which is both harmful and divisive.

On the other hand, some try to humanise the rioters by saying that they are not racist or far-right elements, just men and teenagers who were angry and frustrated due to state neglect, and just went out to vent their frustrations and get free stuff as a bonus. In one meeting, I heard that the rioters were not wrong but frustrated because they have no place in the community, and that men respond aggressively as a matter of biology. Unfortunately, this ends up simply justifying male violence, which does not help us address the crude reality that many working-class men have no place in our society.

Nevertheless, even if they are members of the working class, the rioters do not defend working-class interests. There was a clear fascist element present in the riots, which also goes beyond the riot itself. There have been numerous attacks on migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland lately, and protests led by the far-right have surged since the pandemic with the typical far-right anti-scientific, homophobic, transphobic and racist discourses.

Racism, Fascism And Poverty – A Toxic Mix: Fascism has also been identified by commentators in Ireland as the main factor leading to the riots, because there has long been a reactionary defence of an 'Irish identity' which is mobilised against those perceived to threaten it. However, I do not agree with those who claim that the problem is simply fascism, and that the riots had nothing to do with poverty or migration. If we just state that fascism has long existed in Irish society, we miss its specificity today. I do agree, however, that poverty in itself does not automatically lead to the rise of the far right. This is firstly because the main far-right agitators are from the upper class. American and British far-right activists such as Tommy Robinson have also been fuelling anti-immigrant sentiments in Ireland.

Secondly because poverty is a social phenomenon, a result of the class struggle. This is both an economic and political factor, because the appropriation and distribution of resources is

contested as social resources are constantly privatised. This understanding is crucial to any class analysis. The rise of the far-right worldwide follows the global financial crisis, from which the Western working class did not recover. This poverty is material but also subjective in the sense that access to food or clothing matters as much as life expectations in contemporary society. What can you do and achieve as a person in society? What is your role? So instead of justifying white male anger as biological, we must find the roots of the matter.

Racial divisions among the working class are a feature of capitalism that emerges from the colonial division and exploitation of the world, creating the concept of 'race'. The ruling class in late capitalism still explores such division. One day before the riot, the popular martial arts fighter Conor McGregor wrote on X, formerly Twitter, 'Ireland, we are at war', in response to a report that non-nationals could vote in local elections, and the post was liked by the owner of X himself, the far-right celebrity billionaire Elon Musk.

As a CATU member and housing organiser in Ireland since 2017, I have long been dealing with racist statements during door knockings, stalls and meetings. From this experience, I am aware the majority of people who reproduce racist narratives are not what we would call far-right or convicted racists. Hilary Pilkington's Loud and proud, on the English Defence League, is useful here. Her research found them mostly working-class people who did not perceive themselves as racist, but rather 'warriors of the nation' fighting 'cultural Islamic invasion'. Many of them could be considered 'nice' people who seemed concerned by how they were losing the little they had. Pilkington's findings are illuminating in revealing the problem with nationalist discourses, as well as the need to overcome imagined communities to bring people together under common class interest by targeting who is gaining from the misery of migrants, ethnic minorities, people of colour and white working-class people.

Moreover, if we understand that racism is structural to capitalism, we cannot deny that Irish society and its institutions are racist. This does not mean that we should not work together on an anti-racist front to overcome racism along with capitalism – we must.

How We Combat Racism: However, we should fight racism by showing capital's contradictions, which result in us making sense of the world through a racialised lens. In our work in CATU, we aim to combat racism through talking to people and actively listening to their concerns, and then asking why they think this or that. That way we aim to build a common understanding of the housing crisis – or the capitalist crisis more broadly – and get people together to build alternatives. So while the far right offers the opportunity to shout at vulnerable (mostly traumatised) asylum seekers living in hotels or Direct Provision centres, or burning public transport, we offer the opportunity to get together to target the government and its pro-market policies; to mobilise, organise, construct and emancipate ourselves. Other groups such as the Hope and Courage Collective have focused on producing research and material to inform civil society about the far-right and to engage with decision-makers. The Irish Congress of Trade Union called a demonstration after the riots in solidarity with all those impacted by the event. Other groups and parties have focused on mobilising people in anti-racist actions or planning to physically confront the far right. There has also been a discussion about the efficacy of counter-demonstrations, with some activists asking whether the best moment to engage with people is when adrenaline and the 'herd spirit' are at their height. Others argue that we cannot engage with far-right extremists or fascists, but should 'smash' them.

Another initiative is the recently formed Dublin Communities Against Racism, aiming to work at the local level and let the communities make the decisions. Unfortunately, however, community 'consultations' can be an issue when anti-migrant sentiments are in the rise and the community must decide in a public meeting if asylum seekers should be accommodated in the area. This is not a minor

issue as we have seen many oppositions to house asylum seekers, including burning down their accommodations. So it remains important to organise among and educate our communities in an anti-racist/anti-capitalist perspective. CATU has also been calling for a community approach through its door-knocking to engage with people in the areas where we live. This is CATU's model of organising, so it is nothing new to its members. However, the need to address racism at the doors and how to do so is still up to each local branch member to decide – there is no structure in place to address this issue as a union. There is also not an all-island approach on how to counter the rise of the far right in our areas, as this is up to each branch to decide on. This means that anti-racist organising can vary considerably from one area to another, or even be neglected, as not all members see the far-right as a threat. However, CATU's work to organise around housing is crucial to defeat the far right, not only in Dublin but across the 32 counties, because housing is a central concern of people in Ireland. Housing unaffordability and deprivation are catalysts for unity, but we also need community-led political education to turn things to our side, rather than leaving a vacuum to be occupied by the far-right.

What is to be Done? As a matter of urgency, we should set up a coalition with all left-wing parties and independent politicians, trade unions, community groups and progressive academics to stop the far right from growing – by sharing resources and building solidarity in practice. The coalition must be inclusive of a variety of organisations including migrant led groups fighting against racism and for asylum seekers rights such as MASI – The movement of asylum seekers and LGBTQI groups, also a target of the far right. We should not leave anyone behind.

We need to produce knowledge, political analysis, and research such as mapping the far right in our communities; pressure for more public investment in the volunteer and community sector; but also be on the streets systematically, in our neighbourhoods, engaging in conversations with people, and building direct action against the culprits of the crisis. Many of these things are already being done but we need a network among progressists and left-wing groups to share our resources and exchange solidarity more coherently and effectively. We also need a theory and a practice which are anti-racist and anti-capitalist, moving beyond the non-reflective, pragmatic tactics and short-term responses which are all too common. Thus, while we cannot overlook how frustration and anger motivated the riots, we also need to understand that the problem we face is more complex. Racism is being instrumentalised by the far right to mobilise people.

Racism is not a minor matter in Ireland, as many claim through narrow comparisons with other contexts: I would argue that every person of colour in Ireland has encountered some form of racial discrimination here. It's also the case that since the 2004 citizenship referendum Ireland has become a racial state, where blood not birth determines citizenship rights. Thus, considering race within a class analysis is crucial not only to attract migrants to the anti-capitalist camp by making them feel they belong, but also to combat negative stereotypes that racism is exclusive to working-class people.

Courts Backlog Still Growing: The backlog of cases in both Magistrates Courts and Crown Courts grew in the three months from July to September, while 28 per cent of cases awaiting Crown Court trials had been outstanding for more than a year, according to figures published by the Ministry of Justice in December. The average wait from offence to trial in both types of court was above the level pre-COVID. That has led to Baroness Newlove (pictured), the Victims Commissioner for England and Wales, calling for “urgent and creative intervention” to address what she calls the “crisis” of the backlog. She describes it as a matter of “grave concern.” In a statement, she highlighted an “alarming rise in the overall caseload to 66,500 – a new record high”. She said she was particularly concerned that the proportion of cases outstanding for over a year has also risen

to a new peak. This cannot be solely attributed to the barristers' strike, which concluded more than a year ago, or the pandemic. It suggests there are wider systemic problems in our justice system, and I am concerned that chronic and unacceptable delays are becoming ingrained. This must never be normalised nor tolerated.” The backlog is “unfair on victims who have to wait months or even years for their cases to be heard and is causing many to give up and drop out. No victim should have to wait for years. This has real consequences for our justice system.” Delays in holding trials also adversely impact on the accused, and in particular those held on remand. At the end of December 2022 there were over 14,000 people in prison awaiting trial, of whom more than 1,700 had been held for longer than 12 months.

Keeping Babies Out of Prison: The US state of Minnesota passed the ‘Healthy Start Act’ in 2021, making it the first state to allow some jailed mothers to live outside of prison with their new babies. A few other states, including Indiana and Illinois, have nurseries in prisons which allow mothers to keep their babies with them. In most states, if a woman gives birth in jail or prison she is separated from her baby within hours or days. Safia Khan, Deputy Commissioner at the Minnesota Department of Corrections, said: “The idea was to find ways to prevent separation happening at a very critical time for the development of that newborn baby and to allow for that mother-child bond.” In the last two years, 38 women have been screened for the Healthy Start programme, although only 12 have been accepted. Women can be rejected if their sentences are too long or if their parental rights have been terminated.

Stopping Drugs in Mail: The smuggling of drugs via incoming mail presents a problem for American prison authorities, as it does in the UK. Traffickers are reported to have innovated new ways of infusing narcotics directly into everything from children's drawings to love letters. Paper, ink, and stamps are now all vehicles for contraband. There have even been reports of prisoners rolling joints with family photos laced with fentanyl. Most of the USA's two million prisoners are held in state-run prisons, and at least 15 states, including Texas and Pennsylvania, have banned prisoners from receiving physical mail. Now a bill has been introduced in Congress to tackle the problem in US federal prisons, which hold around 130,000 people. Proposed laws would require all incoming mail to be scanned, with prisoners provided with an electronic copy within 24 hours of receipt. The original mail would be withheld for testing, but would be delivered to the prisoner within 30 days if it proves drug-free. In a pilot scheme at two federal prisons, mail was destroyed after scanning. But according to Logan Seacrest, a resident fellow on the R Street Institute's Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties team, a greeting card or piece of artwork from a loved one provides a lifeline for people behind bars – “Taking away the tactile experience of touching a handwritten letter or smelling perfume on an envelope would likely have a negative impact on prisoner wellbeing, which can increase recidivism and antisocial behaviour.”

X-Ray Body Scanners: 46,000 Positive Scans: One in ten prisoners who go through X-ray body scanners is found to be carrying suspected contraband, according to new figures. In 2020 and 2021, the Government spent £6 million installing the devices at 74 prisons in England and Wales – including every closed male jail. They have since been used 434,968 times, finding suspected illicit items such as drugs, mobile phones, or weapons on 46,925 occasions – a ‘hit rate’ of 10.8 per cent. Because the machines expose people to potentially-harmful radiation, a limit has been set for how many times per year each individual may be scanned. Prison Service rules say prisoners “must only be scanned where there is intelligence or reasonable suspicion that they are internally concealing contraband [and] where there is no other means of detecting the suspected contraband” – but Inside Time revealed in 2021 that

some jails have operated a policy of routinely scanning all new arrivals.

Dying as a Muslim in a US Prison: The Islamic faith specifies rites and process to be carried out when someone dies – but a man detained at New Jersey State Prison (NJSP) has told broadcaster Al Jazeera that Muslims who die there are being cremated in defiance of their beliefs. Many prisoners have no next-of-kin to handle funeral arrangements, so this can lead to bodies being kept refrigerated for a long time and then cremated. A Muslim should be buried after a ritual bath called ghusl and the covering of the body with two white sheets or towels, known as kafan. A janazah, or funeral, is performed before burial. For Muslims, the last rites are a final farewell and religious act of vital importance. The processes should apply equally to those who convert after imprisonment.

Prosecution Offer No Evidence in Drugs Case

HW was charged with possession with intent to, and concerned in the supply of Class A drugs. The drug he was alleged to supply was crack cocaine. He accepted possession of the crack cocaine and denied intention to supply. Months after HW's arraignment, the prosecution produced a further SFR and amended indictment which included counts in relation to the supply of heroin as well as crack cocaine. Katrina challenged the SFR on the basis that the exhibit tested, which suggested HW was in possession of multiple wraps of heroin and cocaine, was wholly incorrect. She emphasised the fact that a witness statement made clear HW was in possession of one small wrap of crack cocaine, and no other drug. Despite multiple requests for clarification and further disclosure, the Crown proceeded to trial in respect of both the supply of heroin and cocaine. On the first day of trial, further requests for disclosure were made by the defence. Subsequent disclosure revealed that, due to police error, two drug exhibits had been bagged and sent together for testing under the same exhibit name. One of the exhibits consisted of the one wrap of crack cocaine seized from the defendant, and the other exhibit contained multiple wraps of both heroin and cocaine, which related to a wholly different case and defendant. The SFR the prosecution sought to rely on concerned the latter exhibit, and was therefore incorrect. Following this revelation, the prosecution offered no evidence against HW in respect of the supply of both crack cocaine and heroin.

Devastating Romance Scams Known as "Pig Butchering"

The term "pig butchering" – or sha zhu pan in Chinese – refers to the process of scammers "fattening" their victims by slowly building their trust before moving in for the kill. It became widely reported around 2019 as a scam that was targeting men in China, but the criminals have since widened their net. In 2021, the FBI received complaints relating to crypto romance scams in the US that resulted in losses of \$429m (£316.9m). In the UK, there is no specific data on pig-butchering but nationwide, crypto fraud is rising rapidly. In the year to December 2022, reported losses in all crypto scams rose 72% to more than £329m, according to ActionFraud.

In a typical case, the prospective victim will be contacted by a scammer (or scammers), often posing as a young, attractive, wealthy Asian person. Sometimes they connect on social media, through a language-learning app, a dating site or via a "wrong number" text. They begin speaking more frequently, swapping selfies – sometimes explicit – and in some cases recording voice notes. After messaging for a while, the topic of finance comes up. Often, the scammer mentions they have a friend who has made money through cryptocurrency or currency trading. Eventually the victim is persuaded to convert their cash into cryptocurrency and transfer it to a trading platform or virtual wallet secretly controlled by the scammer. More time passes, the conversation

carries on and trust continues to build. The "pig" has been fed and fattened; now it can be butchered. They are persuaded to make another transfer, this time involving a far greater amount of money. One UK victim, Sam*, discovered he had lost £54,000 in a pig-butchering scam in December 2021. Around a month earlier, the mechanical engineer, 46, had begun speaking to "Jessica", a New York-based Chinese woman in her thirties who had messaged him on Instagram. He had recently separated from his wife and his father had been diagnosed with cancer.

A woman meets a man online. They flirt. Then, after a few weeks, they begin imagining a future together. Fast forward a few months and one of them has been defrauded of their life savings. It sounds like a classic romance scam, but it isn't. This is "pig-butchering": a brutal and elaborate form of organised crime, often involving criminal syndicates, modern-day slaves and victims around the world. Since it rose to prominence in 2021, this method of fraud – which involves scammers grooming their targets before stealing huge sums in cryptocurrency – has fleeced victims of hundreds of millions of pounds and prompted warnings from Interpol and the FBI. Last month, an inquest heard that one UK victim, a former police officer and father from Wiltshire, took his own life after losing around £100,000 – his entire pension lump sum – in a scam bearing the hallmarks of pig-butchering.

Now, an investigation by the Bureau and the Observer has found that organised crime groups are using the UK as a virtual base for their operations, exploiting lax regulation to carry out fraud on an industrial scale. Analysis has identified 168 UK companies accused of running fraudulent cryptocurrency or foreign exchange trading schemes, around half of which are likely to be linked to pig-butchering scams. Many of these firms are linked through domain registrations and while the vast majority of company directors are resident in China, details about the real owners are scant due to loopholes in the Companies House registration system. Dozens of the companies share an address including an empty shop, a flat above a Chinese takeaway and a council flat in an east London tower block – but appear to have no genuine ties to them. The fact the properties have been linked to frauds is often known to the UK authorities. Yet despite extensive evidence of fraudulent activity, and concerns about the potential for earnings to be laundered via the UK, little has been done to tackle the scam companies – or to prevent new ones from opening.

Margaret Hodge, MP and chair of the APPG on Anti-Corruption and Responsible Tax, said: "This horrible story is not an isolated incident. People traffickers, drug smugglers, fraudsters and scammers have been exploiting our lax and opaque corporate laws for years. "Companies House is our first line of defence, but it's not putting up much of a fight at all. It must check the information it is given and punish those who lie. And it needs to be properly funded to fulfil its role. At present, it costs £12 to incorporate a company. Raising the fee to £100 would provide enough resources to our law enforcement without increasing costs for the taxpayer. Anything short of that and the world's criminal and corrupt will see that they can continue to manipulate and exploit us."

Structural Racism Behind Disproportionate Taser Use

A new study by the College of Policing exposes racial disparities in the use of Tasers, caused not by individual officer bias, but structural and institutional racism. The study highlights that black individuals are over four times more likely to be subjected to Taser use. Contrary to initial perceptions, the report suggests that individual officer decisions are not the leading cause of this racial disparity. The report identifies key factors, emphasizing how and where officers are deployed as crucial elements. Officers are more frequently dispatched to higher crime areas, characterized by acute poverty and larger ethnic minority populations, contributing to the disproportionate use of Tasers.

The Taser saw a significant increase in deployment, from just under 17,000 times in 2017-18 to 34,276 times by 2021-22. The number of officers equipped with Tasers has also risen. Critics argue that the weapon, firing a 50,000-volt electric current, poses serious risks and should be curtailed or banned. Inquest juries have connected Taser use to fatalities, such as the deaths of Jordan Begley in 2013 in Manchester and the death of Marc Cole in 2017 in Falmouth. This raises questions about its safety and appropriateness in policing.

The study recommends radical reforms in police training, emphasizing de-escalation skills over Taser use. It calls for a re-evaluation of when Tasers should be deployed and suggests an institutionalized approach that needs addressing. Report Co- author Dr Ben Bradford emphasises the need to discover whether and how to alleviate ethnic disproportionality. He said: "If this is not possible, then there must be fundamental questions about the continued use of the weapon, at least in its current form."

2024 and the World is in a Very Dark Place

Russia and Ukraine are at war. Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Libya, the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Colombia, and Mali are currently in civil wars. Gaza/West Bank: The continuing destruction of the homes of Palestinians in Gaza by Israeli armed forces is a daily picture on the front of every broadcast around the world. The atrocities taking place in the West Bank, mainly at the hands of Jewish settlers, are far worse than what is happening in the Gaza Strip. The UN's humanitarian aid chief today Friday 29th December, called out the "impossible situation" facing people in Gaza and those trying to help them, as the humanitarian situation on the ground worsens and dozens more civilians are reported killed in Israeli attacks.

In the past decade, the global refugee crisis has more than doubled in scope. In 2022, the UNHCR announced that we had surpassed the 100 million mark for total displacement, meaning that over 1.2% of the global population have been forced to leave their homes. As of mid-2023, that also includes 30.51 million refugees. Over half of those refugees come from just three countries. These numbers are high — almost beyond comprehension — but each one represents a person who has been forced to leave everything behind due to circumstances beyond their control.

1. Syria - Continues to be the world's largest refugee crisis, representing nearly 25% of the total global refugee population. As of mid-2023, 6.49 million Syrians have sought refuge, primarily in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Türkiye . In Lebanon, there are no formal camps, which leaves its population of over 1 million Syrians living across 2,000 communities, often in overcrowded temporary shelters.

2. Afghanistan - The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has made it one of the top countries of origin for refugees. One in every five refugees originated from this country, and over 6.1 million Afghans are internationally displaced — largely in neighboring Pakistan and Iran.

3. Ukraine - In February 2022, escalated conflict in Ukraine led to a full humanitarian crisis, that has displaced over 5.8 million refugees in the last two years. This is more than 13% of the country's population, and just under 20% of the world's global refugee population.

4. South Sudan - The world's youngest nation is also the site of one of its largest refugee crises, one that entered its tenth year last month. Over 4 million South Sudanese have been forced from their homes, with 2.2 million of those having to leave the country entirely.

5. Myanmar - Beginning in August 2017, over 1 million stateless Rohingya fled ongoing violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Many are still living in the world's largest refugee camp, located in nearby Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The Rohingya represent the majority of the 1.26 million refugees displaced from Myanmar over the last six years.

6. Sudan - Conditions in Sudan have deteriorated throughout 2023 as the country faces

some of the worst violence in decades. At the end of 2022, approximately 844,000 refugees around the world were Sudanese. As of mid-2023, that number exceeded 1.02 million, and showed no signs of abating.

7. Democratic Republic of Congo - Remains one of the world's largest "forgotten" humanitarian crises, with events in a protracted situation rarely making headlines. Combining refugees and IDPs, its displacement numbers are the highest in Africa. This includes over 948,000 refugees — an increase of nearly 100,000 over just two years. In tandem with this, the DRC is also a large host community for refugees from neighboring countries.

8. Somalia - In recent years, the number of Somali refugees around the world had been in decline, registering as less than 800,000 last year. Unfortunately, Somalia's protracted cycle of crisis has once again lead to an increase in refugees with over 814,000 as of mid-2023.

9. Central African Republic - For more than a decade, a humanitarian crisis has raged in Central African Republic. It's gone largely unnoticed in mainstream western media, however over 750,000 Central Africans were registered as refugees in 2023 — with thousands more displaced internally.

10. Eritrea - As of mid-2023, over 537,000 Eritreans — nearly 15% of the country's population — have been displaced abroad due to ongoing violence and political instability. This represents an increase of approximately 36,000 people compared to 2022.

Lack of Secure Accommodation for Children

Andrew McFarlane P: The primary purpose of this judgment is for the court, once again, to draw public attention to the very substantial deficit that exists nationally in the provision of facilities for the secure accommodation of children. There are a number, and it is, sadly, an increasing number, of children and young people under the age of 18 years ['a child'] whose welfare and behaviour requires that they be looked after within a secure regime which restricts their liberty. These specialist units are limited in number and, at present, the number of secure beds is far out-stripped by the number of vulnerable young people who need to be placed in them. Courts are regularly told that, on any given day, the number of those needing a secure placement exceeds the number of available places by 60 or 70. It is not the role of the courts to provide additional accommodation; all the court can do is to call the problem out and to shout as loud as it can in the hope that those in Parliament, Government and the wider media will take the issue up.

There is a distinction between cases, such as the present, where the court has made a formal 'secure accommodation order' under Children Act 1989, s 25 ['CA 1989'] and other, bespoke, arrangements where the court may authorise the restriction, or deprivation, of a young person's liberty under its inherent jurisdiction ['DOL's cases']. This judgment is only concerned with the former.

A child may only be kept in secure accommodation if it appears: a) that – i) (s)he has a history of absconding and is likely to abscond from any other description of accommodation; and ii) if (s)he absconds, (s)he is likely to suffer significant harm; or b) that if (s)he is kept in any other description of accommodation (s)he is likely to injure him/herself or other persons. [Children Act 1989, s 25(1)]

Restricting the liberty of a child is a serious step that can only be taken if it is the most appropriate way of meeting the child's assessed needs [Government Guidance: CA 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Vol 1: Court Orders (2014), para 40]. The approach of the court is that such orders will 'only very rarely be appropriate' and 'must always remain a measure of last resort' [Re SS (Secure Accommodation Order) [2014] EWHC 4436 (Fam)]. For some children, placement in a secure children's home will represent the only way of meeting their complex needs, as it will provide them with a safe and secure environment, enhanced levels of staffing, and

specialist programmes of support [Government Guidance (2014), paras 40-42].

In order to maintain focus on the wholesale failure to provide adequate resources to meet the needs of these most vulnerable and needy young people, it is neither necessary nor helpful to individualise the details of the particular case that is currently before the court. The young person, her parents, and the local authority responsible for care are, therefore, to remain anonymous. Within the proceedings it is accepted that no criticism can attach to the local authority, or the individual social workers, who have striven to find a suitable secure placement. The point to be made most firmly is that the situation faced by this local authority is one that can be, and is, faced by every other local authority in England and Wales on a regular basis; it is, tragically, the norm. Naming the local authority in this judgment would therefore be an irrelevant distraction.

Conclusion: This judgment does not record any decision by the court, either about X or more widely as to the law. As I have said, its primary purpose is for the court, once again, to draw public attention to the very substantial deficit that exists nationally in the provision of facilities for the secure accommodation of children. In drawing to a close, it is simply necessary to reiterate the central message by stressing that very senior judges have, for over six years, been consistently calling for Parliament and government to acknowledge the need for action to address the gross lack of registered secure accommodation units.

Judges are currently being forced to perform functions which are properly the role of government by overseeing the search for suitable placements and by sanctioning ad hoc arrangements in individual cases because there is no placement available in the statutory scheme. Whilst the Supreme Court, in *Re T*, has held that using the inherent jurisdiction in this manner is lawful, due to the gross lack of secure accommodation provision the High Court is nevertheless having to operate outside the law as it has been made by Parliament and, despite the judge's consistently asking it to do so, Parliament has seemingly not even discussed this parlous and most worrying situation.

It must be accepted that simply adding to the number of judgments calling for action will not improve the position for young people such as X, but in the present situation, that is all the judges can do. It is a situation that will not change until urgent and effective action is taken by government and Parliament to discharge the obligation that is on the State to protect the country's most vulnerable children. The submissions made on behalf of the Secretary of State are therefore most welcome. They record, it would seem for the first time, an acceptance by the Secretary of State for Education that, nationally, there are significant problems with the availability of sufficient placements and that 'this requires action by His Majesty's Government collectively to support local authorities to meet their statutory needs'. It is to be hoped that this marked change from the approach trailed in the Department's letter of 11 November does indeed result in action and that the need for the court to hand down judgments of this nature will be a thing of the past. Bailli, Handed Down, 08/01/2024, <https://shorturl.at/dfBQ7>

Australia: Highest Number of Indigenous Prison Deaths Since Records Began

2022-23 was the deadliest year on record for First Nations people (Aboriginals) in prison, with a new report leading to increased calls by human rights campaigners to reduce incarceration numbers Australia wide. 21 First Nations prisoners died whilst incarcerated between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, the highest number since 1979-80. Of these tragic deaths, 11 people were unsentenced at the time of their death, they hadn't been found guilty of a crime.

Co-chair of Change the Record, Narungga Woman Cheryl Axleby, says "discriminatory" policies see Indigenous people arrested at "extraordinary" rates. This has resulted in First

Nations people dying in prisons and jails in numbers that have failed to rescind. In the 32 years since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), there have been at least 556 Indigenous deaths in custody. Racist, law-and-order politics and policies cost lives, our communities have endured too much loss. Every death in custody is an unspeakable tragedy for that person's family, friends and community."

This year alone has seen 19 Indigenous deaths in custody – with a further 32 in 2022. They include Cleveland Dodd, 16, who died after being found in his cell at Unit 18 in the adult Casuarina prison; and Jeffrey Winmar, 28, who died in the aftermath of his arrest in suburban Melbourne. The statistics form part of the latest numbers from the Australian Institute of Criminology and are designed to reveal full transparency around Indigenous deaths in custody.

Police Officers Charged With Multiple Offences

Kelly Bonner, BBC News: A serving police officer and a former police officer have been charged with a range of offences. These include misconduct in public office, accessing police computers and taking and sharing images of dead bodies. Further offences include supplying Class B drugs and the attempted supply of Class C drugs. The former officer is also charged with obtaining an image from a PSNI record of Sinn Féin MLA Gerry Kelly. He faces a total of 22 charges, including one of disclosing sensitive information relating to two children. A serving female police officer, who is currently suspended from duty, has been charged with offences including misconduct in connection with a death by stealing medication prescribed to the deceased. She is also charged with stealing cannabis during a drug seizure.

The pair, whose addresses were given as care of Woodbourne PSNI Station in Belfast, were granted an interim anonymity order based on a potential risk to their lives. Counsel for the policewoman, Mark Farrell, told the court: "The defendant I represent was served with a TM1 [threat management] message over the weekend, saying her life was in immediate danger." A lawyer representing the former officer confirmed he has received four similar warnings about a threat to his life. "It's real and imminent," the solicitor added. The alleged offences were committed over a five-year period between July 2012 and September 2017.

Anders Breivik: Mass Murderer Sues Norway Over Prison Isolation

James Gregory, BBC News: A neo-Nazi who killed 77 people in Norway in 2011 is suing the country in a bid to end his years in isolation. Anders Breivik, who killed eight people with a car bomb in Oslo and shot dead 69 people at a summer youth camp, says his conditions breach his human rights. Norway's justice ministry says he must be kept separate from the prison population over security concerns. Breivik's lawyers told a court on Monday the 44-year-old no longer wishes to live. "He has been isolated for about 12 years... He lives in a completely locked world," his lawyer, Oeystein Storrvik, told a court hearing on Monday. "He does not wish to be alive anymore," he added. Breivik is also asking the court to lift restrictions on his correspondence with the outside world. Breivik was sentenced to 21 years - the maximum penalty a court in Norway can impose, though it can be extended for as long as he is deemed a threat - for carrying out the attacks on 22 July 2011. He has challenged the terms of his sentence before, winning part of his human rights case against the Norwegian state in 2016 before it was overturned the following year. The 44-year-old currently spends his time in a dedicated section of Ringerike prison - located on the shores of the lake that surrounds the island of Utoeya, where he shot dead 69 people.