



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

3 October 2007

Press release: Immediate

Commission highlights concerns around TASERs

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission has stated today that until the processes of an Equality Impact Assessment and compliance with human rights standards are satisfactorily completed, the Commission remains opposed to the introduction of TASERs in Northern Ireland even as a pilot.

The Commission urges the Policing Board not to pre-empt the legal obligations of the PSNI. Moreover the Policing Board should take heed of the advice to date put forward by its own human rights advisors. Not to do so flies in the face of its obligation to ensure that human rights standards are complied with.

According to Chief Commissioner, Professor Monica McWilliams:

“The Commission is not opposed to police officers having access to appropriate, less lethal alternatives to firearms, but they can only be introduced following the proper processes of assessment, and then can only be used in accordance with the principle of minimum force. There remain genuine concerns about the safety of this particular technology. As such, concerns have yet to be addressed around the potential for violating Articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights concerning the right to life and inhumane treatment.

ENDS

Further information

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Notes to Editors

1. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was established in 1999, by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to protect and promote the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. The powers and functions of the Commission include reviewing law and practice, advising the government, promoting an awareness of human rights and taking cases to court. It also intervenes in court cases, and this has included European Court hearings on the right to life.
2. Policing Board Statutory Responsibility: Section 3(3)(b)(ii) of the Police (NI) Act 2000 requires the Policing Board "to monitor the performance of the police in complying with the Human Rights Act 1998". The origins of the statutory requirements can be found in Recommendation 1 of the Report of the Independent Commission on Policing, which required the Police Service of Northern Ireland to 'focus policing in Northern Ireland on a human rights approach' and Recommendation 7 which stated that "the performance of the police service as a whole in respect of human rights, as in other aspects, should be monitored closely by the Board."