# Police investigate Rangers fans chanting sectarian songs on open-top Belfast bus



Police in Belfast have launched an investigation into a video that has surfaced, showing Rangers fans travelling on an open-top bus through the city centre while chanting sectarian songs. The incident, which occurred on a recent Friday evening as fans headed to an event at the SSE Arena, highlights ongoing concerns regarding sectarianism in football culture, especially within the context of Scottish football and its passionate rivalries.

The video, quickly disseminated across social media platforms, features supporters believed to be associated with a Belfast-based Rangers supporters club, chanting songs that have a long history of controversy and division. The police's prompt response underscores the importance of addressing these issues in a region still grappling with deeply rooted sectarian tensions.

This incident is not isolated. In fact, similar occurrences have prompted police investigations in the past. Notably, in May 2021, Police Scotland investigated allegations that Rangers players had used sectarian language during a function celebrating their league title victory. This was triggered after TikTok footage emerged depicting players engaged in chanting. The police collaborated with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in their enquiries to assess the claims.

In July 2022, another investigation related to Rangers fans culminated in the closure of a separate case regarding sectarian singing during a match. Police had previously escorted a group of fans to Hampden Park, ensuring they bypassed high-risk areas amidst concerns about potential sectarian clashes. Ultimately, after reviewing video evidence, authorities indicated they had exhausted all lines of inquiry but expressed readiness to re-investigate should new information arise.

Rangers' ongoing issues with sectarianism date back many years and have not gone unnoticed by footballing authorities. In April 2011, UEFA found the club guilty of discriminatory behaviour due to similar chants by fans, resulting in bans from future European matches. Such rulings highlighted the governance body's stance against sectarianism and its desire to mitigate its presence in football.

The "Famine Song," which alludes to the Great Famine of the 1840s, is one of the more infamous chants associated with the club and has drawn substantial criticism for its sectarian sentiments. It reflects the socio-political tensions remaining in both Ireland and Scotland, particularly between Rangers and their local rivals, Celtic F.C., whose supporters often identify with Irish nationalism.

Legislation aimed at curbing sectarian behaviour, such as the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012, was introduced to combat these issues. This law classified the singing of sectarian songs as an offence. In its first year of enactment, it led to numerous charges, predominantly against young male fans. However, after significant backlash over its effectiveness, the law was repealed in 2018, raising questions about the best way to address the chronic problem of sectarianism in the sport.

The connection between football fandom and sectarian identity is well-documented and fuels ongoing tensions, as evidenced by the May 2002 riots in Belfast following a Scottish Cup Final between Rangers and Celtic. This violent outbreak involved hundreds of individuals and resulted in injuries to both police officers and civilians, illustrating the extent to which football can serve as a flashpoint for sectarian clashes.

As the police in Belfast continue to investigate the recent incident, the broader implications of sectarianism in football remain a significant concern, prompting calls for both stricter regulations and a cultural shift. The need for change is evident, not only in ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for fans but also in fostering a community less defined by historic divides.

Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/watch-rangers-fans-sing-sectarian-songs-from-open-top-belfast-bus/a1338190376.html)
* Paragraph 2: [[2]](https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/police-investigate-claims-rangers-players-used-sectarian-language-at-party-1.4567530)
* Paragraph 3: [[3]](https://www.skysports.com/football/news/11781/12660173/police-close-investigation-into-sectarian-and-anti-catholic-singing-by-rangers-fans)
* Paragraph 4: [[4]](https://www.foxsports.com/stories/soccer/uefa-punishes-rangers-over-fans-sectarian-songs)
* Paragraph 5: [[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famine_Song)
* Paragraph 6: [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offensive_Behaviour_at_Football_and_Threatening_Communications_%28Scotland%29_Act_2012)
* Paragraph 7: [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_2002_Belfast_riots)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/watch-rangers-fans-sing-sectarian-songs-from-open-top-belfast-bus/a1338190376.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/police-investigate-claims-rangers-players-used-sectarian-language-at-party-1.4567530> - In May 2021, Police Scotland launched an investigation into claims that Rangers players used sectarian language during their title celebrations. The probe was initiated after TikTok footage emerged showing players and others singing inside a function suite. Police Scotland assessed the video and liaised with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service as part of their enquiries.
3. <https://www.skysports.com/football/news/11781/12660173/police-close-investigation-into-sectarian-and-anti-catholic-singing-by-rangers-fans> - In July 2022, Police Scotland concluded their investigation into sectarian and anti-Catholic singing by a group of Rangers fans being escorted to Hampden Park. The group was moved away from a high-risk area before Rangers' 2-1 extra-time win over Celtic in the Scottish Cup semi-final. After reviewing video footage, police exhausted all lines of enquiry and stated that any new information would be thoroughly investigated.
4. <https://www.foxsports.com/stories/soccer/uefa-punishes-rangers-over-fans-sectarian-songs> - In April 2011, UEFA's disciplinary committee found Rangers guilty of discriminatory behavior due to their fans' sectarian songs. The club was banned from attending one away European competition match, with a further one-match ban suspended for three years. UEFA also deferred a one-match stadium closure for a probationary period of three years, urging the club to curb persistent sectarian chants.
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famine_Song> - The 'Famine Song' is a chant sung by some Ulster loyalists in Ulster and Scotland, often directed at Catholics and those of Irish descent. It is also sung by fans of Scottish football club Rangers due to rival Celtic's Irish roots. Set to the tune of 'The John B. Sails,' the song references the 1840s' Great Famine of Ireland and has been criticized for its racist and sectarian nature.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offensive_Behaviour_at_Football_and_Threatening_Communications_%28Scotland%29_Act_2012> - The Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 made it an offence to sing 'sectarian songs,' such as Irish rebel songs or anti-Catholic songs like 'No Pope of Rome.' The law led to 268 charges in the year after its passage, with 99% of those charged being male and 73.5% under the age of 30. The act was repealed in 2018 due to criticism that it unfairly targeted football fans and failed to tackle sectarianism effectively.
7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_2002_Belfast_riots> - The May 2002 Belfast riots were sectarian clashes in north Belfast, Northern Ireland, involving up to 800 people. The violence erupted shortly after the Scottish Cup Final, where Rangers F.C. beat Celtic F.C. Petrol bombs and fireworks were thrown at Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers, resulting in injuries to 28 police officers and 10 civilians. The riots were a consequence of longstanding sectarian tensions in the region.