# Pro-immigration protests escalate traffic disruption in Belfast following Ballymena violence



Belfast experienced significant traffic disruption on Tuesday evening as protesters gathered at Carlisle Circus to voice their opposition to immigration policies. The demonstration, which began shortly after 6pm, involved a small group of individuals holding placards with messages such as, "Respect our country or leave." Police were present to maintain order during the protest, which is part of a series of actions planned throughout Northern Ireland following a violent rally that occurred in Ballymena.

This rally in Ballymena the previous day escalated into violence, contributing to a heightened sense of unrest across the region. Reports indicated that the Ballymena gathering was advertised to commence at 7.30pm, just as protests were planned in several towns, including Antrim, Larne, Carrickfergus, and Newtownabbey. While the protest at Carlisle Circus did create some traffic delays, reports by 7pm suggested that the disruptions were minimal at that time.

The emergence of such protests in Northern Ireland is not unprecedented. Similar protests and riots have erupted in the past, reflecting deep-seated tensions surrounding immigration and national identity. For instance, back in September 2012, rioting near Carlisle Circus, prompted by a contentious republican parade, resulted in injuries to 47 police officers and significant property damage. The violence that day showcased a broader pattern of civil disorder in response to perceived provocations.

In stark contrast to these anti-immigration rallies, Belfast witnessed a substantial anti-racist demonstration in August 2024, attended by thousands who advocated for migrant rights. Organised by the United Against Racism group, this event aimed to counter the rising tide of xenophobia in the region and received support from various community organisations. The stark juxtaposition of these movements underscores the ongoing societal divide regarding immigration and inclusivity in Northern Ireland.

The Irish Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, had previously issued warnings regarding individuals from the Republic of Ireland participating in protests in Northern Ireland, particularly anti-immigrant ones that turned violent. This highlights the government’s resolve to control the spillover effects of unrest on both sides of the border, underscoring the delicate nature of civil discourse in the region.

In the context of Northern Ireland’s complex history, the current protests illustrate the challenges facing the province as it navigates its social landscape. As events unfold, the community remains watchful of potential further unrest, particularly in light of the planned demonstrations across multiple cities and towns.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/traffic-disruption-in-north-belfast-as-roundabout-closed-by-protesters-supporting-ballymena-rally-which-turned-into-violence-E6WE7EJTOFF3VDMWJ3COVRBBJU/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/traffic-disruption-in-north-belfast-as-roundabout-closed-by-protesters-supporting-ballymena-rally-which-turned-into-violence-E6WE7EJTOFF3VDMWJ3COVRBBJU/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/traffic-disruption-in-north-belfast-as-roundabout-closed-by-protesters-supporting-ballymena-rally-which-turned-into-violence-E6WE7EJTOFF3VDMWJ3COVRBBJU/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/traffic-disruption-in-north-belfast-as-roundabout-closed-by-protesters-supporting-ballymena-rally-which-turned-into-violence-E6WE7EJTOFF3VDMWJ3COVRBBJU/), [[5]](https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/2024/08/05/people-crossing-border-to-join-violent-protests-will-be-identified-says-minister/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-19735570), [[6]](https://www.thejournal.ie/queens-university-belfast-closed-planned-protests-psni-6458862-Aug2024/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.thejournal.ie/belfast-anti-racist-demonstration-6460157-Aug2024/), [[7]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/anti-racism-rally-to-be-held-in-belfast-after-week-of-anti-immigration-disorder-RO7VTKZ24BEFDMWIR2646CF6B4/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/traffic-disruption-in-north-belfast-as-roundabout-closed-by-protesters-supporting-ballymena-rally-which-turned-into-violence-E6WE7EJTOFF3VDMWJ3COVRBBJU/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/traffic-disruption-in-north-belfast-as-roundabout-closed-by-protesters-supporting-ballymena-rally-which-turned-into-violence-E6WE7EJTOFF3VDMWJ3COVRBBJU/> - On 10 June 2025, a protest supporting the Ballymena rally turned violent, leading to traffic disruptions at Carlisle Circus in Belfast. Protesters, some holding placards reading "Respect our country or leave," blocked the main road, causing significant traffic issues. Police were present at the scene as the protest occurred shortly after 6pm. This demonstration was part of a series of protests planned across Northern Ireland, including in Ballymena, Larne, Antrim, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, and Lisburn, following the unrest in Ballymena on Monday. As of 7pm, minimal disruption was reported, though the Ballymena gathering was scheduled to start at 7.30pm.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-19735570> - Rioting erupted in Belfast on 2 September 2012 following a controversial republican parade. The violence, which lasted eight hours, resulted in 47 police officers being injured. The disturbances were centred around Carlisle Circus and surrounding streets, with rioters throwing bricks, heavy stones, and roof slates at police. The High Court described the rioting as threatening anarchy in society and noted that those involved had terrorised the elderly and put lives at risk.
4. <https://www.thejournal.ie/belfast-anti-racist-demonstration-6460157-Aug2024/> - In August 2024, thousands gathered in Belfast for an anti-racist demonstration organised by the United Against Racism group. The march began at Writer’s Square, with participants holding placards bearing anti-racism and pro-migrant messages. The protesters marched to City Hall, chanting slogans such as "When migrants’ rights are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back." The demonstration aimed to counteract the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment and promote inclusivity in the city.
5. <https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/2024/08/05/people-crossing-border-to-join-violent-protests-will-be-identified-says-minister/> - In August 2024, the Irish Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, warned individuals from the Republic of Ireland against joining anti-immigrant protests in Northern Ireland. She stated that those crossing the border to participate in violent demonstrations would be identified and held responsible for any criminal activity. This warning followed a series of anti-immigrant rallies in Belfast that had escalated into violence, leading to property damage and injuries.
6. <https://www.thejournal.ie/queens-university-belfast-closed-planned-protests-psni-6458862-Aug2024/> - In August 2024, around a thousand people gathered at Belfast City Hall to counter an anti-immigration demonstration. The counter-protest was organised by various groups, including trade unions and community organisations, to oppose the anti-immigration rally. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had a significant presence to ensure safety and manage the situation, as there was a risk of spontaneous protests and potential disorder.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/anti-racism-rally-to-be-held-in-belfast-after-week-of-anti-immigration-disorder-RO7VTKZ24BEFDMWIR2646CF6B4/> - Following a week of anti-immigration rioting and disorder in Belfast in August 2024, an anti-racism rally was organised in the city centre. The demonstration aimed to promote inclusivity and counteract the rise in racist sentiments. The rally received support from over 100 organisations, including political parties, trade unions, and community groups, and was part of a broader effort to address the challenges posed by anti-immigrant sentiment in Northern Ireland.