# Belfast faces multiple protests amid rising hate crime and political tensions



Disruption is anticipated in Belfast city centre this Saturday as multiple protests converge, tackling issues of trans rights, anti-racism, and immigration. The unfolding events highlight the current societal tensions within Northern Ireland, particularly in the face of rising hate crimes and divisive political climates.

The demonstrations are set to commence with a march advocating for trans rights, organised by the Rosa Socialist Feminist movement. This rally will begin at Writers Square at 12pm, making its way through Donegall Street, Royal Avenue, Donegall Place, and ultimately concluding at Donegall Square North. Following this, the United Against Racism Belfast group will lead an anti-racism rally at City Hall, starting at 1pm and also making its way along the same route, culminating in a series of protests from 2pm onwards.

According to the police, a significant presence will manage traffic and ensure public safety throughout these events. “To avoid potential delays, please plan your journey in advance and seek an alternative route for your journey during these times,” a police spokesperson advised, expecting that disruptions will taper off by 3:30pm.

The United Against Racism Belfast group has pointed to alarming statistics that reflect the increasing frequency of racially motivated hate incidents in Northern Ireland. Recent figures reveal that these incidents reached an unprecedented 1,188 cases in the past financial year—an increase of 349 compared to the previous year, with over half occurring in Belfast alone. This troubling reality has ignited calls for collective action. A spokesperson from the group stated that the statistics are “disturbing and infuriating,” and highlighted the virulent nature of attacks on migrant communities, both online and in person. “Everyone has a responsibility to speak out and join forces against racism,” they urged, emphasising the need for united action against hate.

This protest trend echoes a broader sentiment witnessed across Northern Ireland, where community solidarity against racism has manifested in previous rallies. Last month, hundreds participated in anti-racism protests in Belfast and Derry, indicating a growing public dissent against racial discrimination.

Competing against the backdrop of these anti-racism efforts will be demonstrations opposing immigration. A poster advertising this anti-immigration protest features the slogan “time to rise,” which has provoked concern among those advocating for inclusivity and diversity. The rise of far-right rhetoric and disinformation has been cited as exacerbating tensions and alienating minority groups. Many advocates have increasingly pointed to the role that political discourse plays in shaping public sentiment towards immigrants and communities of colour.

Simultaneously, the trans rights march signals a response to legislative challenges, particularly the recent ban on puberty blockers instituted by Stormont, and a UK Supreme Court ruling regarding the legal definition of a woman. Advocates argue that these actions undermined the rights and identities of transgender individuals. A recent motion in the assembly, introduced by People Before Profit MLA Gerry Carroll, sought to reverse the puberty blocker ban but was ultimately not supported by the Executive.

As Belfast braves the anticipated disruptions of these protests, the events serve as an urgent reminder of the societal divisions and the ongoing struggle for equality amid rising tensions. The collective call for action resonates not only within the confines of the city but reflects a broader appeal across Northern Ireland for a shared future that embraces diversity and combats hatred in all its forms.

In a climate where the statistics on hate crime are disheartening, the upcoming protests exemplify a steadfast commitment among many in the community to foster dialogue, understanding, and change. The interwoven nature of these protests underscores the necessity for proactive engagement and accountability from all segments of society in addressing these pressing issues.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5, 7
2. Paragraphs 2, 5, 6
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 5
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 5
7. Paragraph 4

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/disruption-expected-ahead-of-multiple-protests-in-belfast-city-centre-6XXZ63EPYJDSVPGWFERPREWLY4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/disruption-expected-ahead-of-multiple-protests-in-belfast-city-centre-6XXZ63EPYJDSVPGWFERPREWLY4/> - An article from The Irish News detailing multiple protests planned in Belfast city centre, including demonstrations in support of trans rights, anti-racism, and against immigration. The piece outlines the routes and timings of these protests, the expected disruptions, and the police's advice to the public. It also highlights the United Against Racism Belfast group's concerns over the rise in racially-motivated hate crimes in Northern Ireland, citing statistics showing a significant increase in such incidents over the past year.
3. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/northern-ireland-latest-police-figures-show-race-hate-crimes-hit-all-time-high> - Amnesty International's press release discussing the latest Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) report, which reveals that racist incidents and crimes have reached an all-time high during the summer of 2024. The report indicates a significant increase in such incidents compared to the previous year, with more than half occurring in Belfast. The release emphasizes the need for a zero-tolerance approach to racist and other hate-motivated crimes in Northern Ireland.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-66929240> - A BBC News article covering an anti-racism rally in Belfast city centre, organized by United Against Racism Belfast. The rally was in response to a series of recent attacks in south Belfast, with over 100 people gathering to show support for those affected by racism. The article includes statements from organizers and participants, highlighting the community's commitment to opposing racism and supporting victims.
5. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/northern-ireland-race-hate-incidents-all-time-high> - Amnesty International's press release highlighting the PSNI report that recorded 1,353 racist incidents and 839 racist crimes in the 12 months to the end of March 2024, marking the highest figures since records began in 2004. The release notes that almost half of these incidents occurred in Belfast and calls for a zero-tolerance approach to racist and other hate-motivated crimes in Northern Ireland.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8xljlezljvo> - A BBC News article reporting on a significant anti-racism rally in Belfast city centre, organized by a collective of organizations including the trade union movement, United Against Racism, and End Deportations Belfast. The rally was a peaceful response to recent racist violence, with organizers emphasizing the community's commitment to diversity and opposition to racism. The article includes statements from organizers and participants, highlighting the scale and significance of the demonstration.
7. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/northern-ireland-race-hate-incidents-new-all-time-high> - Amnesty International's press release discussing the PSNI report that recorded 1,411 racist incidents and 891 racist crimes in the 12 months to the end of June 2024, the highest figures since records began in 2004. The release notes that almost half of these incidents occurred in Belfast and calls for a consistent response from the police, clear political leadership, and effective strategies from the government to tackle racism and hate crimes in Northern Ireland.