



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

Ionad na hÉireann do Chearta an Duine
Irish Centre for Human Rights

‘ICHR STUDENTS’

STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSION TO INFORM IRELAND’S FOURTH UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

9 April 2026

About

The authors of this submission are students in the 1st year Law (BCL) and Human Rights degree class at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, University of Galway. The authors are aged in their late teens and early twenties; as such, this submission offers an insight into numerous human rights issues of concern to young people in Ireland.

The Irish Centre for Human Rights (ICHR) at the School of Law, University of Galway is Ireland’s principal academic human rights institute. The ICHR undertakes human rights teaching, research, publications and training, and contributes to human rights policy development nationally and internationally. The Law (BCL) and Human Rights degree programme was established in 2019.

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OVERVIEW

This submission addresses a range of issues which are analysed in depth with supporting references in the accompanying **Appendix**. The Appendix notes the extent to which these issues arose during Ireland's third Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Here we provide a list of recommendations which we invite states to consider making to Ireland during its fourth UPR in November 2026.

Access to Healthcare

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Inadequacies

- Address the persistent gaps in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provision and ensure equal access across all regions in the country.
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of future mental health reforms to ensure that they result in measurable improvements in access and quality of care.

Mental Health Services generally

- Allocate a higher percentage of the national healthcare budget to fund mental health services; align with the 10% required by the Sláintecare plan.
- Provide incentives to increase the number of practising psychologists, in turn reducing the length of waiting lists for mental health services.
- Commit to making mental health services accessible for everyone regardless of location, cost or age.

Persistent Barriers to Transgender Healthcare; Retrogressive Measures

- Adopt an informed consent model for gender-affirming healthcare aligned with WPATH Standards of Care.
- Allocate adequate funding for gender-affirming healthcare in upcoming budgets.
- Guarantee timely, equitable access to gender-affirming healthcare through a revised framework.

Lack of Clinical Research

- Address the dearth of research into and availability of treatment for women's health concerns, including endometriosis.
- Address the dearth of research into and treatment available for chronic disease, including Crohn's disease and Inflammatory Bowel Disease.



Lack of affordable student accommodation and housing for young people

- Ensure the availability and affordability of student accommodation across the country.
- Address the heightened cost of student accommodation by reassessing the financial means test in place for the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant.
- Prioritise making home-ownership in the State attainable for all.
- Urgently advance a referendum on a Constitutional right to adequate housing.

Agriculture and the Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment

- Revise and further enforce current climate policies and practices, especially within the agricultural sector, to comply with both domestic and international legal commitments.
- Disincentivise the use of chemical and manure fertilisers, especially those high in nitrogen and phosphorus, and set stricter quotas for the use of these fertilisers close to bodies of water to prevent algae overgrowth and other harmful effects on local marine life.
- Create a plan to reduce the number of intensive farmers approved under the Nitrates Derogation and reduce the allowed amount per hectare through a gradual transition and eventual quota of 170kg as is followed by all other EU Member States.

The Rights of People in the International Protection System

The Rights of Children in Ireland's International Protection System

- Pursue the abolition of the Direct Provision system.
- Introduce a statutory time limit on children's stays in international protection accommodation.
- Ensure independent child impact assessments prior to any deportation decision affecting a child, and publish independently verified data to enable effective oversight of such decisions.

Asylum Seekers' Right to Work

- Take all necessary steps to decrease the delays in the provision of Labour Market Access Permits.
- Address the problems of racism and discrimination faced by asylum seekers and refugees in recruitment processes and the workplace.



Education

Access to Irish-Medium Education

- Ensure the availability of Irish-medium education (IME) for young people throughout the State.
- Consider re-introducing the Irish-teaching allowance and sabbatical courses for teachers to increase the availability of IME.

English as an Additional Language Supports

- Ensure that English as an Additional Language supports are being utilised in the correct manner in schools and that intercultural awareness is being built amongst students.

Socio-Economic Discrimination

- Introduce measures to prevent excessive reliance on private tutoring and fee-paying grind schools at second level.
- Assess the overall equality impact of the Leaving Certificate points system.
- Expand targeted financial supports for pupils and students from lower income households.

Ensuring Education Equity for Out-of-School Students

- Introduce Guidelines to assist parents in navigating the available supports for children unable to attend school, whether due to disability, prolonged illness, or mental health challenges.
- Commence all sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act.
- Increase Home Tuition hours granted to out-of-school students.
- Increase public awareness of the Home Tuition Scheme, ensuring those eligible can avail of the support quickly, thereby minimising the educational impact of prolonged absence.
- Incorporate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into domestic law.

The Rights of Older Persons in Residential Care Settings

- Adopt a comprehensive Adult Safeguarding Act with clear statutory obligations in respect of all residential care settings.
- Enhance the enforcement capabilities of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) including its powers to require corrective action and to gain access to private nursing homes.
- Provide older persons with independent, accessible complaint and investigation procedures free from retaliation.



Ireland's obligation to take every available measure to prevent Israel's genocide, apartheid and unlawful occupation in Palestine

US use of Shannon Airport

- Implement stricter inspections of planes landing in Shannon Airport.
- Rescind ICE's permission to refuel in Shannon airport.
- introduce legislation to stop automatic landing clearance for civilian planes being operated by foreign governmental agencies which are reasonably suspected of violating human rights.
- Inspect aircraft attached to credible allegations of human rights abuses, and guarantee protection for any person found to be at risk of suffering human rights violations.

Irish Trade with Israel: A Lack of Political Urgency

- Pass the Occupied Territories Bill into law, including a prohibition on services as well as goods provided or produced by an illegal settler in an occupied territory.

Ireland's Support of Palestinian Higher Education

- Increase support to Palestinian universities and their staff and students.
- Ensure effective oversight of universities in Ireland so that their activities and international partnerships comply with international human rights standards.
- Require Irish universities to undertake human rights due diligence, including impact assessments, when entering into research or institutional partnerships.

Ireland and the Apartheid Convention

- Ratify the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973).



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Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Inadequacies in Ireland

Third Cycle UPR recommendations to Ireland raised the need for inclusive and human rights-based health and mental health policies, and adequate resources for the healthcare system in Ireland.¹ In its stakeholder submissions to inform the Third Cycle UPR, the Ombudsman for Children's Office raised concerns regarding delays and deficiencies in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), highlighting the impact of prolonged waiting times on children's access to timely mental health care.² As of 2026, these delays remain unresolved, leaving many young people in Ireland without access to mental health support when it is needed most.

Recent evidence indicates that significant deficiencies remain within CAMHS, despite ongoing reform commitments. The Mental Health Commission's *Independent Review of the Provision of CAMHS*, published in 2023, identified notable regional disparities in access, prolonged wait times for assessment and widespread staffing shortages within services.³ The Review found that some CAMHS teams were operating substantially below recommended staffing levels, limiting their ability to provide treatment and support for children and adolescents.⁴ More recent reports indicate that thousands of young people remain on CAMHS waiting lists, with a large number experiencing extended delays before receiving care.⁵ Collectively, these findings reveal that the Irish Government's current actions remain insufficient to resolve ongoing gaps in young people's mental health services.

The persistent inadequacies of CAMHS give rise to significant concerns regarding Ireland's obligations under international human rights law. Article 12 of the ICESCR obliges States to ensure the availability, accessibility and quality of health services.⁶ Similarly, Article 24 of the UNCRC, to which Ireland is a State Party, guarantees every child the right to the highest attainable standard of health.⁷ These obligations are not optional; States must take clear and effective steps to ensure they are fully implemented. These ongoing gaps in CAMHS provision raise serious concerns regarding the State's compliance with its binding human rights obligations to protect young people's right to health.

¹ OHCHR, 'UPR of Ireland (3rd Cycle – 39th Session), Matrice/Thematic list of recommendations' ([ohchr.org](https://www.ohchr.org)), Recommendations 157.163, 157.168, 157.171 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 16 February 2026.

² Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO), Submission to the 39th Session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group on Ireland (March 2021) para 20.

³ Mental Health Commission, *Independent Review of the Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in the State – Interim Report* (January 2023) paras 4, 15, 16, 23.

⁴ *Ibid* paras 3.5, 23.

⁵ Jennifer Bray, 'Hundreds of children waiting more than a year to access mental health services in Ireland' *The Irish Times* (18 February 2025) <https://www.irishtimes.com/health/2025/02/18/hundreds-of-children-waiting-more-than-a-year-to-access-mental-health-services/> accessed 26 February 2026.

⁶ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 993 UNTS 3, Art 12.

⁷ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) 1577 UNTS 3, Art 24.



Since the third UPR cycle, Ireland has introduced certain reforms aimed at improving CAMHS provision. In 2022, additional funding was allocated to mental health services, including investment in specialist teams and community-based supports.⁸ Targeted initiatives have been developed in specific regions to improve access pathways. The HSE has also reported the recruitment of additional clinical staff to expand service capacity.⁹ Despite these efforts, considerable challenges remain. Recent evidence reveals that significant numbers of young people across the country remain on waiting lists for assessment and treatment.¹⁰ At the end of 2024, over 4,200 children and adolescents were on waiting lists nationally.¹¹ In some regions, approximately 40% had been waiting more than twelve months for an appointment.¹² These gaps demonstrate that, while some progress has been made, Ireland has yet to ensure quality mental health care for all young people.

Given these findings, we respectfully urge that Ireland be asked:

- How does the State plan to address the persistent gaps in CAMHS provision and ensure equal access across all regions?
- How will the State monitor and evaluate the implementation of its future mental health reforms to ensure that they result in measurable improvements in access and quality of care?

⁸ Department of Health, Budget 2022: Mental Health Allocations (Government of Ireland 2022) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/press-releases/budget-2022-minister-donnely-announces-21-billion-the-biggest-ever-investment-in-irelands-health-and-social-care-services/> accessed 26 February 2026.

⁹ Health Service Executive, National Service Plan 2023 (HSE 2023) <https://about.hse.ie/publications/national-service-plan-2023/> accessed 28 February 2026.

¹⁰ RTÉ News, 'Young people facing long waits for mental health support, committee hears' (28 January 2026) <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2026/0128/1555528-camhs-services/> accessed 28 February 2026.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² EchoLive, 'Almost 40% of young people on CAMHS waiting lists in Cork and Kerry have waited more than 12 months' <https://www.echolive.ie/corknews/arid-41571295.html> accessed 28 February 2026.



Mental Health Services

During Ireland's third UPR in 2021, there was a recurring recommendation made by other countries to expedite the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹³ and to 'implement further measures to give full effect to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.¹⁴ Other countries also acknowledged the need to 'provide sufficient resources for our health-care system by ensuring the availability of adequate infrastructure, funding and medical workers'.¹⁵ Additionally, it was mentioned that Ireland should continue to encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities in making decisions about the health care they receive, in line with the UNCRPD.¹⁶

Ireland acceded to the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD on 31 October 2024 and it entered into force with respect to Ireland on 30 November 2024.¹⁷ However, the Government has failed to provide the "sufficient resources" that were promised. Under Article 25(b) of the UNCRPD, the State is obliged to 'provide health services needed by persons with disabilities specifically because of their disabilities, including early identification and intervention as appropriate, and services designed to minimize and prevent further disabilities, including among children and older persons'.¹⁸ Despite this obligation, there is a concerning shortage of psychologists in this country. Data collected by RTÉ suggest that children have had to wait over 13 years to receive the psychological care they require.¹⁹ It has also been reported that approximately 3,000 adults are currently waiting to be seen by a psychologist with 50% of adults having to endure delays of up to a year or more.²⁰

¹³ UN OHCHR, 'UPR of Ireland (3rd Cycle – 39th Session), Matrice/Thematic list of recommendations' (*ohchr.org*), Recommendation 157.30. <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index>> accessed 28 February 2026.

¹⁴ Ibid, Recommendation 157.39.

¹⁵ Ibid, Recommendation 157.168.

¹⁶ Ibid, Recommendation 157.250.

¹⁷ Department of Children, Disability and Equality, 'Optional Protocol to the Convention on Persons with Disabilities to come into force in Ireland on 30 November 2024' (6 November 2024)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/press-releases/optional-protocol-to-the-convention-on-persons-with-disabilities-to-come-into-force-in-ireland-on-30-november-2024/> accessed 28 February 2026.

¹⁸ Convention to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted 12 December 2006, entered into force 3 May 2008) 2515 UNTS 3 (UNCRPD) art 25.

¹⁹ Aisling Kenny, 'Children waiting up to 13 years to see primary care psychologist' (*RTE News*, 10 November 2025) <https://www.rte.ie/news/health/2025/1110/1543052-child-psychologist-services/> accessed 27 February 2026; David Cullinane, 'Dire shortage of psychologists leaving children waiting years for vital care' (*Sinn Féin*, 10 November 2025) <https://sinnfein.ie/news/dire-shortage-of-psychologists-leaving-children-waiting-years-for-vital-care-david-cullinane-td/> accessed 26 February 2026.

²⁰ Eilish O'Regan, 'Thousands of adults on waiting lists to see a psychologist as demand for 'talk therapy' rises' *Irish Independent* (Dublin, 4 February 2026) <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/thousands-of-adults-on-waiting-lists-to-see-a-psychologist-as-demand-for-talk-therapy-rises/a2112243084.html> accessed 27 February 2026.



It is crucial that the Government address the serious underfunding of mental health in Ireland. Mental health only receives 5.8% of the total health budget, despite the 10% recommended by Sláintecare.²¹ Labour Health Spokesperson Marie Sherlock is quoted as saying:

These figures lay bare a mental health system that is overburdened, understaffed and failing adults (and children) who are crying out for help. For someone experiencing anxiety, depression or another mental health difficulty, that kind of delay is simply unacceptable. Mental health care is essential healthcare.²²

Currently, people are left with the impossible decision of having to pay privately for the treatment that they need and therefore suffering severe financial strain as a result or to suffer indefinitely to save the money they need to survive. It is important to note that a session with a private psychologist can cost anywhere up to €90-€180 and it usually is not just one session that is required.²³ In the event that a person does secure an appointment with a public psychologist, because of such a high demand for their services, subsequent appointments are typically irregular. This can stunt the client's recovery as routine appointments are essential to maintain progress.

To combat this issue, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has recently developed the National Service Plan 2026.²⁴ The HSE has vowed to create 'a more person-centred and inclusive mental health system where people have access to timely supports of varying intensity to match their needs at any point in their recovery journey'.²⁵ This is a positive step forward as it shines a light on the cracks in the system that must be patched, but futile if appropriate and immediate action is not being taken.

We request that Ireland is asked:

- Will it allocate a higher percentage of its health budget to fund mental health services and align with the 10% laid out by Sláintecare?
- Will it provide incentives to increase the number of practising psychologists, in turn, reducing the length of waiting lists?
- Will it commit to making mental health services accessible for everyone regardless of location, cost or age?²⁶

²¹ Marie Sherlock, 'Labour demands urgent action on adult mental health waits' (*Labour*, 4 February 2026) <https://labour.ie/news/2026/02/04/labour-demands-urgent-action-on-adult-mental-health-waits/>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Health Service Executive, 'Getting talk therapy privately' (*HSE*, 28 August 2025) <https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/services-support/talk-therapy/private-therapy/#:~:text=%E2%82%AC30%20and%20%E2%82%AC60,180%20with%20a%20private%20psychologist.>

²⁴ National services and schemes, *National Service Plan 2026* (HSE 2025) 23 https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_National_Service_Plan_2026.pdf/.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Mental Health Commission, 'Guidance for Irish mental health services on the adoption and implementation of a human-rights based approach to care and treatment' (MHC 2025) 20 <https://www.mhcirl.ie/publications/guidance-irish-mental-health-services-adoption-and-implementation-human-rights-based> accessed 26 February 2026.



Persistent Barriers to Transgender Healthcare and Retrogressive Measures under the ICESCR

In Ireland's third UPR, recommendations were made to implement appropriate health services for Ireland's LGBTQ+ community. Supported recommendations included continuing to take steps to remove any remaining structural barriers and challenges that preclude LGBTQ+ people from achieving their full potential,²⁷ and take the necessary steps to provide sufficient resources, adequate infrastructure, funding and medical workers to the healthcare system.²⁸ Despite these commitments, transgender healthcare in Ireland remains under-resourced, centralized, and inaccessible, resulting in persistent violations of the right to health,²⁹ right to non-discrimination³⁰ and right to bodily autonomy.³¹

Ireland's transgender healthcare is consistently ranked 'one of the worst in Europe'.³² The National Gender Service (NGS), based in Dublin, is Ireland's sole provider of gender-affirming care, with over 2,000 people on its waiting list as of December 2025³³ and a projected four and a half year wait time.³⁴ In December 2025, the service announced they are indefinitely suspending new referrals effective from March 1st 2026, claiming to be significantly under-resourced and unable to meet the high demand of the service.³⁵ This suspension constitutes a clear retrogressive measure under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)³⁶ as it places thousands of transgender people at risk of being left without any viable public pathway to specialised care.

In a 2023 *Belong To* survey on access to trans healthcare, 90% of participants indicated they have or would pursue alternative pathways to this healthcare with 51% indicating they pursued private care

²⁷ United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'UPR of Ireland, 3rd Cycle – 39th Session: Thematic list of recommendations' (*ohchr.org*), Recommendation 157.82 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 28 February 2026.

²⁸ *ibid*, Recommendation 157.168.

²⁹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 993 UNTS 3 (ICESCR) art 12(1).

³⁰ Equal Status Act 2000, s 3(2)(a).

³¹ Bunreacht na hÉireann, Art 40.3^o; *Ryan v Attorney General* [1965] IR 294 (SC), established the unenumerated right to bodily integrity under Article 40.3^o.

³² Dáil Éireann Debates 3 December 2025, Vol 1077, No.1; Noah Adams & Deekshitha Ganesan, *The State of Trans-Specific Healthcare in the EU* (TGEU 2023) <https://www.tgeu.org/files/uploads/2023/11/TGEU-Trans-Health-Map-Report.pdf> accessed 28 February 2026.

³³ Eibh Anderson, 'LGBTQ+ Coalition Statement on the Closure of the National Gender Service's waitlist' (TENI, 12 December 2025) <https://teni.ie/lgbtq-coalition-statement-on-the-closure-of-the-national-gender-services-waitlist/#:~:text=This%20closure%2C%20with%20over%20%2C400,the%20EU%20for%20trans%20healthcare> accessed 28 February 2026.

³⁴ 'National Gender Service Ireland waiting times' (NGS) <https://nationalgenderserviceireland.com/waiting-times-2/> accessed 28 February 2026.

³⁵ 'National Gender Service can't close waiting list – HSE' (RTÉ, 13 December 2025). <https://www.rte.ie/news/2025/1213/1548912-national-gender-service/> accessed 28 February 2026.

³⁶ ICESCR (n 3) art 2(1).



abroad in response to the barriers faced in the centralized trans healthcare system in Ireland.³⁷ This reliance on costly alternatives aggravates current economic inequalities and undermines Ireland's obligations under the ICESCR to ensure accessible, affordable, and equal healthcare without discrimination.³⁸

International best practice, as outlined in the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care (SOC), emphasizes an informed-consent model to provide safe, affirming, and effective healthcare for transgender people.³⁹ This model was addressed in The Irish Government's 2021 *Programme for Government*⁴⁰ but absent from the equivalent programme for 2025.⁴¹ signalling regression or stagnation rather than progress. In a Dáil debate in February 2026, the Minister for Health announced the establishment of a National Clinical Programme for Gender Healthcare which would aim to develop an updated clinical Model of Care.⁴² However, there was no mention of adopting WPATH SOC guidelines, introducing an informed-consent model, or mention of any current framework to the Model of Care.⁴³

Despite the escalating crisis in transgender healthcare, neither the HSE *Capital Plan 2026*⁴⁴ nor the HSE *National Service Plan 2026*⁴⁵ contain any reference to reform gender-affirming healthcare or the development of alternative pathways. Only in the *2025 National Service Plan* was funding of €0.7m allocated to transgender healthcare with incremental funding of an additional €0.7m required for 2026.⁴⁶ This is insufficient to address the possible closure of the NGS let alone to fund the Model of

³⁷ Aideen Quilty, 'Trans Healthcare in Ireland: Accessing Healthcare related to Gender Identity for Trans and Non-binary People' (Belong To, 2024) <https://www.belongto.org/app/uploads/2024/09/Belong-To-Trans-Healthcare-in-Ireland-Research-Report.pdf> accessed 28 February 2026, 34.

³⁸ ICESCR (n 3) ; CESCR, General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Article 12 of the Covenant), 11 May 2000, E/C. 12/2000/4, para 12.

³⁹ TENI, 'Trans Healthcare Another way is possible' (*Transgender Equality Network Ireland*, 21 August 2024) [https://teni.ie/trans-healthcare-another-way-is-possible/#:~:text=The%20World%20Health%20Organisation%20\(WHO,United%20Clinic%20in%20the%20Netherlands](https://teni.ie/trans-healthcare-another-way-is-possible/#:~:text=The%20World%20Health%20Organisation%20(WHO,United%20Clinic%20in%20the%20Netherlands) accessed 28 February 2026 ; E. Coleman and others, "Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8" (2022) 1(1) *IJTH* <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/wijt21?src=pdf> accessed 28 February 2026.

⁴⁰ Government of Ireland, '*Programme for Government: Our Shared Future*' (October 2020) 77.

⁴¹ Government of Ireland, '*Programme for Government 2025: Securing Ireland's Future*' (January 2025).

⁴² Dáil Éireann Debate (Unrevised), Question 1055, 10 February 2026 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2026-02-10/1055/#pq-answers-1055> accessed 28 February 2026.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Health Service Executive, '*Capital Plan 2026: Building and Equipment*' (2026) https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_Capital_Plan_2026.pdf/ accessed 28 February 2026.

⁴⁵ Health Service Executive, '*National Service Plan 2026*' (2026) https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/HSE_National_Service_Plan_2026.pdf/ accessed 28 February 2026.

⁴⁶ Health Service Executive, '*National Service Plan 2025*' (2025) 88 https://about.hse.ie/api/v2/download-file/file_based_publications/hSE-National-Service-Plan-2025.pdf/ accessed 28 February 2026.



Care that is said to be under development.

Ireland's failure to implement previous UPR recommendations, combined with the absence of an adequately funded, and accessible model of transgender healthcare, constitutes an ongoing breach of its human rights obligations under the ICESCR. Without structural reform to gender-affirming healthcare, transgender people in Ireland will continue to face significant delays, discriminatory barriers, and restrictions to their right to bodily autonomy.

We request that Ireland is asked:

- Will it adopt an informed consent model for gender-affirming healthcare aligned with WPATH Standards of Care?
- Will it allocate adequate funding for gender-affirming healthcare in upcoming budgets?
- Will it guarantee timely, equitable access to gender-affirming healthcare through a revised framework?



Lack of Clinical Research in Ireland

In Ireland's third Universal Periodic Review, there were recommendations to provide more resources for the healthcare system, including infrastructure & funding,⁴⁷ to have more inclusive healthcare for all,⁴⁸ and to ensure adequate standards of living for everyone.⁴⁹ However, the lack of medical research was not explicitly referred to in the review.

Clinical research in Ireland is insufficient, due to staffing shortages, and lack of infrastructure and funding.⁵⁰ This is especially dire for women's health; according to an article published by the National Women's Council, women face serious challenges accessing healthcare due to lack of services and research in women's health.⁵¹ Endometriosis is significantly under-researched, despite affecting around 155,000 women in Ireland.⁵² An article from Irish Health Pro states there has been a "historic gender gap in terms of medical research" and "[m]any of the landmark clinical trials... exclusively enrolled males," despite the results being used for both men and women.⁵³

The situation for chronic disease is not much better. In 2030, 70% of health loss worldwide is estimated to be from chronic illnesses, and the amount of people suffering from them in Ireland is on the rise.⁵⁴ For example, Crohn's disease is severely under-researched. According to the HSE, the causes of the disease are unknown, and there is no cure⁵⁵ or exact test to diagnose the patient.⁵⁶ The

⁴⁷ UN OHCHR, 'UPR of Ireland (3rd Cycle – 39th Session), Matrice/Thematic list of recommendations' (ohchr.org) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 16 February 2026, recommendation 157.168.

⁴⁸ Ibid, recommendation 157.163.

⁴⁹ Ibid, recommendation 157.158.

⁵⁰ Oonagh Ward and Helen Kennelly, 'Review of clinical research infrastructure in Ireland' (*Health Research Board*, August 2019) <https://www.hrb.ie/publication/review-of-clinical-research-infrastructure-in-ireland/> accessed 18 February 2026.

⁵¹ Doireann Crosson and Poushali Kundu, 'Our Health, Our Voices – Women's Experience of Healthcare in Ireland Listening Forum, Report 2' (*National Women's Council*, October 2025) <https://www.hrb.ie/publication/review-of-clinical-research-infrastructure-in-ireland/> accessed 17 February 2026.

⁵² RCSI, 'RCSI experts say women's health 'poorly understood' and underfunded in Ireland' (*Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, University of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 11 March 2025) <https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/news-and-events/news/news-article/2025/03/womens-health-underfunded-in-ireland> accessed 16 February 2026.

⁵³ Niall Hunter, 'Bridging the gender gap in women's healthcare' (*Irish Health Pro*, 23 June 2025) <https://www.irishhealthpro.com/content/articles/show/name/bridging-the-gender-gap-in-womens-healthcare> accessed 23 February 2026.

⁵⁴ Catherine Darker, 'Integrated Healthcare in Ireland – A Critical Analysis and a Way Forward' (*The Adelaide Health Foundation*) <https://adelaide.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Integrated-Healthcare-in-Ireland.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026.

⁵⁵ HSE, 'Crohn's Disease' (*HSE*, last reviewed 9 August 2024) <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/crohns-disease/> accessed 17 February 2026.

⁵⁶ Ibid.



doctors have to rule out other conditions by doing blood and stool tests, as well as scans and invasive scopes.⁵⁷ After diagnosis, it can take time to find a medicine that works, as there are many forms of treatment and patients react to them differently.⁵⁸

A survey done in 2024 shows that 14% of people in Ireland with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) wait for more than a year before they are referred to a hospital and diagnosed.⁵⁹ Another 47% had to go to A&E before they were diagnosed.⁶⁰ This is unacceptable, as IBD flare-ups disrupt school, work, and social life, and without proper treatment can lead to bigger issues, such a need for surgery and bowel cancer.⁶¹

Healthcare is a fundamental right for all. Under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,⁶² Ireland must eliminate the gender gap in healthcare, and make sure adequate research and care is provided for women's health. Under Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, everyone has "the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health."⁶³ Ireland can improve lives by providing more resources for medical research. Under the World Health Organisation, healthcare is a human right, and it should be accessible for everyone without discrimination.⁶⁴

Since 2021, Ireland has made progress towards improving research in women's health. For 2026-2027, €2m in funding was announced for women's health research, being the first time funding was dedicated specifically to women's issues.⁶⁵ In 2024, a plan was established to provide more supports for women's health, including providing more hubs and clinics for endometriosis and

⁵⁷ Crohn's and Colitis Ireland, 'Diagnosis' (*Crohn's and Colitis Ireland*)

<https://crohnscolitis.ie/support/diagnosis/facts/> accessed 21 February 2026.

⁵⁸ HSE, 'Crohn's Disease' (HSE, last reviewed 9 August 2024) <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/crohns-disease/> accessed 17 February 2026.

⁵⁹ Crohn's and Colitis Ireland, 'Ahead of World Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Day this May 19, Crohn's & Colitis Ireland Releases Survey Results of 1,400 People with IBD' (*Crohn's and Colitis Ireland*) <https://crohnscolitis.ie/about/news/survey2024/> accessed 21 February 2026.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ HSE, 'Crohn's Disease' (HSE, last reviewed 9 August 2024) <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/crohns-disease/> accessed 17 February 2026 .

⁶² UN OHCHR, 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' (*ohchr.org*, 18 December 1979) <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cedaw.pdf> accessed 24 February 2026.

⁶³ UN OHCHR, 'International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' (*ohchr.org*, 16 December 1966) <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cescr.pdf> accessed 24 February 2026.

⁶⁴ WHO, 'Human Rights' (*World Health Organisation*, 1 December 2023) <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-rights-and-health> accessed 24 February 2026.

⁶⁵ Department of Health, 'Minister for Health announces €2 million in ringfenced funding for women's health research for 2026 and 2027' (*Government of Ireland*, 18 December 2025) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/press-releases/minister-for-health-announces-2-million-in-ringfenced-funding-for-womens-health-research-for-2026-and-2027/> accessed 21 February 2026.



menopausal health, and for new research to improve outcomes for women's health.⁶⁶

We recommend that more funding and resources are made available for medical research, especially in areas where it is lacking.

We request that Ireland be asked:

- Does the Government plan to provide more support and resources to aid those suffering with chronic illnesses?

⁶⁶ Department of Health, 'Women's Health Action Plan 2024-2025 Phase 2: An Evolution in Women's Health' (*Government of Ireland*, last updated 9 May 2024) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/publications/womens-health-action-plan-2024-2025-phase-2-an-evolution-in-womens-health/> accessed 21 February 2026.



Lack of affordable student accommodation and housing for young people

In Ireland's third UPR review, stakeholders' submissions recognised the urgent requirement for provision of 'affordable, secure housing at a necessary scale.' Furthermore, there was a multitude of submissions calling for a referendum to enshrine a right to housing in the Irish constitution.⁶⁷ Additionally, several countries recommended that the state 'intensify efforts' to provide adequate, affordable housing for all, emphasising vulnerable communities.⁶⁸ This submission focuses on recommendations for students and young people.

The current climate of student accommodation interferes with the fundamental right to education.⁶⁹ Arguably it breaches Ireland's obligations under Article 13 of the ICESCR and Article 2 of the ECHR.⁷⁰ In 2022, of the 300 students who deferred their studies in the University of Galway, nearly one third cited accommodation issues as the reason.⁷¹ Students should not have to choose between housing or exercising their right to education. Universities across Limerick, Cork, Dublin and Galway face a significant deficit of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA).⁷² At the end of 2025, the number of PBSA across the state stood at 47,600.⁷³ This represents a clear issue of supply and demand, given the number of full-time students in HEA-registered third level institutes for the academic year 2024/2025 was 215,585.⁷⁴

The government's current plan to deliver 42,000 student beds over the next decade represents positive progress, however with the current delays around planning permission and construction, this target seems unlikely.⁷⁵ At present 15,000 student beds have been granted planning permission

⁶⁷Amnesty International, 'Ireland Amnesty International Submission To The UN Universal Periodic Review, 39th Session of The UPR Working Group' (1-12 November 2021) [AI_UPR39_IRL_E_Main.pdf](#) accessed 25th February 2026.

⁶⁸ UN OHCHR, 'UPR of Ireland' (3rd cycle-39th session), Matrice/Thematic list of recommendations' (ohchr.org) [UPR39_Ireland_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx](#) accessed 25th February 2026.

⁶⁹ Students putting education on hold due to accommodation crisis' *RTE News* (26 September 2022) <https://www.rte.ie/news/connacht/2022/0926/1325485-college-accommodation> accessed 27th February 2026.

⁷⁰ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) article 13, European Convention on Human Rights (adopted 4th November 1950, entered into force 3rd September 1953) article 2.

⁷¹ Students putting education on hold due to accommodation crisis' *RTE News* (26 September 2022) <https://www.rte.ie/news/connacht/2022/0926/1325485-college-accommodation> accessed 27th February 2026.

⁷² Tanya Reut, 'Shortage of 38,900 student beds in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway' *RTE News* (17 February 2026) <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2026/0217/1558989-shortage-student-beds/> accessed 27th February 2026.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Louise Burne, 'Accommodation crisis: Colleges to be asked to cut number of days students must be on campus' *Irish Examiner* (23 February 2026) <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/politics/arid-41798249.html> accessed 27th February 2026; Emmet Mythen, 'Delivery of student beds in 2026 forecasted to



but have not yet advanced to tender or construction.⁷⁶ It is recommended that the government address these delays so that students enjoy their right to education, instead of dropping out or deferring their studies.

Countries in Ireland's third UPR review also recommended that affordability be considered when providing adequate housing.⁷⁷ Article 31 of the European social charter refers to making 'the price of housing accessible' with regard to housing rights.⁷⁸ The current housing costs for students are astronomical and place severe financial pressure on students and families.⁷⁹ In Galway the situation is critical with prices ranging from €800 to €2000 per month for a single bed apartment.⁸⁰ The situation in Dublin is equally dire with rents in UCD being as high as €11,888 per annum.⁸¹ The government does have a system of financial aid for students in place in the form of the SUSI grant, however the eligibility test for this scheme is so rigid, many students are left deprived of financial assistance.⁸² The scheme measures gross household income but fails to consider extra living costs incurred by families.⁸³ This means many students and families are left to bear the burden of extreme rental costs on their own, making education untenable. We recommend Ireland address the heightened cost of student accommodation and reassess the financial means test in place.

In addition to education and housing rights violations, Article 23 of the ICCPR recognises one's right to found a family; this right is also enshrined in the Irish Constitution.⁸⁴ One survey conducted in 2025 concluded that 48% of couples were delaying marriage due to housing concerns.⁸⁵ Further Data

be the lowest level in over 20 years' *Trinity News* (3 February 2026)

<https://www.trinitynews.ie/2026/02/delivery-of-student-beds-in-2026-forecasted-to-be-lowest-level-in-over-20-years/> accessed 27th February 2026.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ UN OHCHR, 'UPR of Ireland' (3rd cycle-39th session), Matrice/Thematic list of recommendations' (ohchr.org) [UPR39_Ireland_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/en/indicators/UPR39_Ireland_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx) accessed 28th February 2026.

⁷⁸ European Social Charter revised (adopted 3rd April 1996, entered into force 1st July 1999) article 31 s(3).

⁷⁹ Donna McGettigan TD, 'Student accommodation crisis and college fee hike cast shadow over cao offers- Donna McGettigan TD' *Sinn Féin* (27 August 2025) <https://sinnfein.ie/news/student-accommodation-crisis-and-college-fee-hike-cast-shadow-over-cao-offers-donna-mcgettigan-td/> accessed 28th February 2026.

⁸⁰ Eamon Chin, "'a scam": students struggle with high rents and cost of living in Galway' *student Independent News* (3 December 2025) <https://sin.ie/2025/12/03/a-scam-students-struggle-with-high-rents-and-cost-of-living-in-galway/> accessed 28th February 2026.

⁸¹ Donna McGettigan TD, 'Student accommodation crisis and college fee hike cast shadow over cao offers- Donna McGettigan TD' *Sinn Féin* (27 August 2025) <https://sinnfein.ie/news/student-accommodation-crisis-and-college-fee-hike-cast-shadow-over-cao-offers-donna-mcgettigan-td/> accessed 28th February 2026.

⁸² Dáil Éireann, Dáil debates, Questions: Student Accommodation Donna McGettigan TD (29th January 2026) <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2026-01-29/18/> accessed 28th February 2026.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16th December 1966 , entered into force 23rd March 1976) article 23.

⁸⁵ Paul Ainsworth, 'Couples delaying having children due to Republic's housing crisis' *The Irish News* (12 February 2025) <https://www.irishnews.com/news/couples-delaying-having-children-due-to-republics-housing-crisis-> accessed 29th February 2026.



showed that 7 in 10 people in their mid-twenties are still living at home or have returned to live in the family home.⁸⁶ The fundamental right to start a family should not be interfered with based on lack of housing or extortionate rent prices. The median price of buying a home last year rose by 7%.⁸⁷ The National Youth Council of Ireland also found that three in five people under twenty five are thinking of emigrating.⁸⁸ Young people have the right to create an independent life, separate to their parents, with respect for their own private and family life under Article 8 of the ECHR.⁸⁹

We request Ireland is asked:

- to prioritise making home-ownership in the state attainable for all.
- to urgently advance a referendum on a constitutional right to adequate housing.

⁸⁶ Jamie Boys, 'Young adults in Ireland 12 times more likely to live at home than Danish counterparts' *Extra* (14 December 2025) <https://extra.ie/2025/12/14/news/young-adults-more-likely-to-live-at-home> accessed 29th February 2026.

⁸⁷ Social Democrats, 'Homeownership dreams evaporate as property prices continue to rise' *social democrats* (18 February 2026) <https://www.socialdemocrats.ie/homeownership-dreams-evaporate-as-property-prices-continue-to-rise/> accessed 29th February 2026.

⁸⁸ National Youth Council of Ireland, 'Cost-of-living crisis leaving young people fearful for the future warns NYCI' *National Youth Council of Ireland* (10 September 2025) <https://www.youth.ie/articles/cost-of-living-crisis-leaving-young-people-fearful-for-the-future-warns-nyci/> accessed 29th February 2026.

⁸⁹ European Convention on Human Rights (adopted 4th November 1950, entered into force 3rd September 1953) article 8.



Agriculture and the Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment

In the third Universal Periodic Review, Ireland was recommended by several states to take further action to ensure the right to a clean and healthy environment. It was advised to “[i]mplement the 2019 Climate Action Plan and advance on the climate change adaptation framework⁹⁰ as well as ‘recognise in its national legislation the right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment’.⁹¹

In 2021, Ireland passed the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, which legally binds itself to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 2018 levels.

Currently, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) projects that even with full implementation of existing climate plans, Ireland will only achieve a maximum reduction of 23% by 2030.⁹² Agricultural emissions are projected to increase by 1% by 2030 if existing measures are followed. This is driven by growing populations of dairy cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry and increased fertiliser use. If Ireland adopts all additional measures, it could only reduce emissions by a maximum of 16%,⁹³ falling short of what is required for national and international targets. Agriculture is predicted to contribute to 41.6% of all of Ireland’s emissions, yet it does not see the reductions necessary to meet domestic and international climate targets. Ireland has ratified the Paris Agreement⁹⁴ and is bound by EU law to reduce emissions in line with the Effort Sharing Regulation⁹⁵.

These predicted shortcomings in Ireland’s emission reductions are concerning for climate change and the protection of local ecosystems.

⁹⁰ United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘UPR of Ireland, 3rd Cycle – 39th Session: Thematic list of recommendations’ (ohchr.org), Recommendation 157.107 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 27 February 2026.

⁹¹ Ibid, recommendation 157.106.

⁹² Environmental Protection Agency, ‘EPA Projections Show Ireland off Track for 2030 Climate Targets’ (EPA Press Releases for 2025, 27 May 2025) <https://www.epa.ie/news-releases/news-releases-2025/epa-projections-show-ireland-off-track-for-2030-climate-targets.php> accessed 27 February 2026.

⁹³ Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2024-25 (epa.ie, May 2025) <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/air-emissions/07875-EPA-GHG-Projections-Report-FINAL.pdf> Accessed 1 March 2026.

⁹⁴ See United Nations Climate Change, ‘The Paris Agreement’ <http://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>. The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. Its main goal is to keep “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and attempt “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” Ireland has ratified this treaty and so is legally bound to ensure it makes every effort it can to reduce emissions to align with its requirements.

⁹⁵ See Regulation (EU) 2023/857 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 April 2023 amending Regulation (EU) 2018/842 on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member States from 2021 to 2030 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement, and Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 [2023] OJ L 111/1. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32023R0857>. This binds Ireland to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 42% compared to 2005 levels.



Factors outside of greenhouse gas emissions also pose challenges. There is concern for the effect that current agricultural practices, such as fertiliser spreading, have on the water quality and health of marine life in Ireland.

As found in the EPA's Water Quality 2019-2024 Summary Report,⁹⁶ only 52% of Irish surface waters are in satisfactory or good condition.⁹⁷ Additionally, 44% of river sites in Ireland have high nitrate concentrations, and 32% of lakes have elevated phosphorus concentrations⁹⁸ compared to 2019. These excess nutrients are largely caused by agricultural waste and fertiliser runoff. An increase in fertiliser sales by 8%⁹⁹ and nitrogen content by 11% in 2024 suggests that current action taken may be insufficient.

On 1 January 2026, the European Commission extended the nitrate derogation for Ireland until the end of 2028.¹⁰⁰ The limit of 170kg of organic nitrogen per hectare per year does not apply to all Irish farmers. Intensive, usually dairy, farmers can apply annually for a derogation that allows them to apply up to 250kg per hectare per year on their land, provided they follow strict environmental restrictions.¹⁰¹

We request that Ireland is asked:

- Will it reduce greenhouse gas emissions enough to comply with both national obligations and the bounds of the Paris Agreement?

⁹⁶ Environmental Protection Agency, 'Water Quality 2019-2024 Summary Report' (Monitoring & Assessment: Freshwater & Marine Publications, 2025) <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/EPA-Water-Quality-in-Ireland-Summary-Report-ACC.pdf> Accessed 1 March 2026.

⁹⁷ Environmental Protection Agency, 'EPA's assessments of water quality and agriculture' <https://www.epa.ie/environment-and-you/freshwater-and-marine/water-quality-and-agriculture/> Accessed 01 March 2026.

⁹⁸ Ibid: "Nitrate and phosphorus help plants grow. Too much of these nutrients in water can cause overgrowth of aquatic plants and algae which leads to eutrophication. The excessive growth outcompetes other plants, uses up dissolved oxygen, and blocks light to deeper waters, leading to imbalances in the ecosystem. Both phosphorous and nitrogen play a role in eutrophication. The general rule is that phosphorus is of most concern in our freshwaters, and nitrogen is of most concern in estuaries and coastal waters."

⁹⁹ See Central Statistics Office, Fertiliser Sales 2024 <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-fsa/fertilisersales2024/> Accessed 28 February 2026.

¹⁰⁰ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/67 of 22 December 2025 amending Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/696 granting a derogation requested by Ireland pursuant to Council Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources [2026] OJ L 67/1. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32026D0067&qid=1772430089388> Accessed 27 February 2026

¹⁰¹ European Commission Press Release, 'Commission extends nitrates derogation for Ireland' (ec.europa.eu 22 December 2025) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_3150 Accessed 27 February 2026.



- Will it affirm water quality standards across the country, with a focus on the effect of the agricultural sector's emissions?
- Will it commit to the reduction of fertiliser use and ensure the EU Nitrates Directive is followed with a transition away from its reliance on the nitrate derogation?

We recommend that Ireland:

- Revise and further enforce current climate policies and practices, especially within the agricultural sector, to comply with both domestic and international commitments.
- Disincentivise the use of chemical and manure fertilisers, especially those high in nitrogen and phosphorus. Also set stricter quotas for the use of these fertilisers close to bodies of water, to prevent algae overgrowth and other harmful effects to local marine life.
- Create a plan to reduce the number of intensive farmers approved under the nitrates derogation and reduce the allowed amount per hectare through a gradual transition and eventual quota of 170kg as is followed by all other EU Member States.



The Rights of Children in Ireland's International Protection System

Ireland ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992.¹⁰² Article 3 requires the “best interests of the child” to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.¹⁰³ This includes decisions relating to reception conditions and immigration status.¹⁰⁴ Article 27 further recognizes the right of every child to an adequate standard of living that supports their physical, mental, and social development.¹⁰⁵ Ireland is also bound by Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.¹⁰⁶ These obligations apply to all children residing in the State, including those seeking international protection.¹⁰⁷ As such, reception arrangement and deportation procedures must be assessed against Ireland's duty to ensure safety, adequate living standards and child focused decision-making.

In the 2021 Universal Periodic Review for Ireland, there were pushes from other countries to implement recommendations concerning the protection of asylum seekers and the reform of the Direct Provision system. States such as Canada urged Ireland to abolish the Direct Provision system altogether.¹⁰⁸ Other states also suggested that Ireland improve their safeguards for migrant children. Ireland accepted these recommendations and published the 2021 White Paper to End Direct Provision.¹⁰⁹ Despite this, prolonged stays in institutional accommodations and concerns regarding children's living conditions persist.¹¹⁰ Living conditions within Direct Provision centers have been widely criticized as overcrowded and unsuitable for family life.¹¹¹ Many families are accommodated in one room, sometimes requiring children of different genders to share a bed, while bathrooms and other facilities

¹⁰² Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted November 20 1989, entered into force September 2 1990) 1577 UNTS 3 (CRC).

¹⁰³ CRC art 3 (1).

¹⁰⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 14 (2013) on the Right of the Child to Have His or Her Best Interests Taken as a Primary Consideration, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/14, para 6.

¹⁰⁵ CRC (n 1) art 3 (1).

¹⁰⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976) 999 UNTS 171 (ICCPR) art 7.

¹⁰⁷ ICCPR (n 5) art 2(1).

¹⁰⁸ Government of Canada, UPR 39, Republic of Ireland – Universal Periodic Review: Recommendations by Canada (10 November 2021) https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/upr-epu/ireland-irelande.aspx?lang=eng accessed February 25 2026.

¹⁰⁹ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *White Paper on Ending Direct Provision* (26 February 2021) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/press-releases/minister-ogorman-publishes-the-white-paper-on-ending-direct-provision/> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹¹⁰ Edmund Rice International, *Ireland – UPR Joint Submission 2021* <http://www.edmundriceinternational.org/ireland-upr-submission-2021/> accessed February 25, 2026.

¹¹¹ Asylum Information Database, ECRE, *Country Report: Ireland — AIDA update* https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/AIDA-IE_2021update.pdf accessed February 25, 2026.



are communal, shared with unrelated adults.¹¹² The proximity of children to unknown adults raises legitimate child protection concerns and can limit parents' ability to pursue employment or education where alternative childcare is unavailable.¹¹³ These conditions directly affect children's development.¹¹⁴

The right to play is supposedly recognized as integral to children's physical and social wellbeing; however, children in Direct Provision frequently lack access to safe, dedicated indoor or outdoor play areas and instead remain confined to shared living quarters.¹¹⁵

Concerns have also been raised regarding food. Although meals are supplied three times daily, the institutional, canteen-style system restricts parental autonomy and limits families' ability to prepare culturally appropriate meals.¹¹⁶ This erosion of parental control may undermine parental authority and can lead to children rejecting unfamiliar food, creating potential nutritional risks. Families receive a weekly allowance of €38.80 per adult and €29.80 per child, an amount that non-governmental organizations have noted as insufficient to cover essential expenses such as transport, school materials and extracurricular activities.¹¹⁷ Prolonged exposure to these living conditions has been linked to increased levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms.

In addition to reception conditions, deportation procedures also raise concerns about the protection of children's rights. Deportation orders are issued according to section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 and involve broad ministerial discretion.¹¹⁸ While the State is required to consider familial circumstances, questions remain as to whether the best interests of the child are consistently treated as a primary consideration.¹¹⁹ The deportation of a parent or an entire family may result in familial

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Róisín Dunbar, Lauren Burke, Neasa Candon et al, 'Direct Provision's Impact on Children: A Human Rights Analysis' (Irish Centre for Human Rights, September 2020) https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/irishcentreforhumanrights/files/reports/Direct-Provision-Report_-ICHR_Final-23.09.pdf accessed February 25, 2026.

¹¹⁴ 'History will not judge us well': Children unsafe in Direct Provision, Ombudsman warns' *TheJournal.ie* (19 October 2023) <https://www.thejournal.ie/childrens-ombudsman-report-into-direct-provision-6200672-Oct2023/> accessed February 25 2026.

¹¹⁵ Asylum Information Database, ECRE, *Country Report: Ireland — AIDA update* https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/AIDA-IE_2021update.pdf accessed February 25 2026.

¹¹⁶ Keelin Barry, 'What's Food Got to Do With It? Food Experiences of Asylum Seekers in Direct Provision' (Nasc, May 2014) <https://nascireland.org/publications/whats-food-got-to-do-it-food-experiences-asylum-seekers-direct-provision-2014> accessed February 25 2026.

¹¹⁷ Asylum Information Database 'Forms and levels of material reception conditions: Republic of Ireland' (ECRE, updated 2 June 2025) <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland/reception-conditions/access-and-forms-reception-conditions/forms-and-levels-material-reception-conditions/> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹¹⁸ Immigration Act 1999 s 3.

¹¹⁹ *Dimbo v Minister for Justice* [2008] IESC 26.



separation, a disruption to education, and possible exposure to harsh conditions in the receiving state. These outcomes engage Ireland's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Articles 3 and 9, as well as protections relating to the family and non-refoulment under international human rights law.¹²⁰

Although Ireland has committed to reforming its international protection application system, the continued accommodation of children in institutional settings and the absence of clearly defined child-specific safeguards in deportation decisions remain matters of concern. A rights-based approach would require that children seeking protection are treated as rights-holders that are entitled to dignity, stability and meaningful consideration of their best interests.

Ireland should therefore be asked:

- Will the State introduce a statutory time limit on children's stays in international protection accommodation?
- Will the State ensure independent child impact assessments prior to any deportation decision affecting a child, and publish unbiased data to enable effective oversight?

¹²⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) 1577 UNTS 3 (CRC) arts 3, 9.



Asylum Seekers' Right to Work

In the Third Cycle of the UPR, several countries¹²¹ and stakeholders¹²² made recommendations to Ireland regarding asylum seekers and their right to work. Doras specifically 'recommended that Ireland remove the legislative barriers restricting international protection applicants' access to work.'¹²³ The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance called for more assistance to be given to asylum seekers when accessing the labour market.¹²⁴ Amnesty International confirmed that, despite Ireland claiming to support recommendations in the Second Cycle to shorten the processing times for refugee status applications, which would give instant access to the labour market,¹²⁵ there were still not enough resources to make this a reality.¹²⁶ The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs following the third UPR specifically referred to the need for Ireland to have regard to '[r]ecognising and validating the educational qualifications of migrants, including professional skills acquired abroad, with particular respect to securing employment.'¹²⁷

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that '[e]veryone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.'¹²⁸ Additionally, Ireland must provide asylum seekers with employment under the International Protection Act 2015.¹²⁹ However, in reality, this right is not always adequately fulfilled; asylum seekers face many barriers when looking for jobs and working in them. This is a persisting issue in Ireland, even after the recommendations from the Third Cycle.

¹²¹ United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'UPR of Ireland, 3rd Cycle – 39th Session: Thematic list of recommendations' (ohchr.org), Recommendations 157.75, 157.89, 157.126, 157.252, 157.254, 157.259 and 157.260 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 16 February 2026.

¹²² United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'UPR of Ireland, 3rd Cycle – 39th Session: Summary of stakeholders' information' (ohchr.org), Recommendation 120 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 16 February 2026.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Citizens Information: Your rights when you get international protection: Employment (citizensinformation.ie) <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/refugee-status-and-leave-to-remain/your-rights-when-you-get-international-protection/#a6f12> accessed 20 February 2026.

¹²⁶ Amnesty International Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review, 39th Session of the UPR Working Group: Follow up to the Previous Review (ohchr.org), Refugees and Asylum Seekers (9) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/uprie-stakeholders-info-s39> accessed 16 February 2026.

¹²⁷ United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'UPR of Ireland, 3rd Cycle – 39th Session: Letter by the High Commissioner to the Foreign Minister' (ohchr.org), D. Rights of specific persons or groups: Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 16 February 2026.

¹²⁸ Article 23.1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

¹²⁹ International Protection Act 2015.



The formal waiting time for asylum seekers to receive their Labour Market Access permit and begin work in Ireland is six months after applying for asylum,¹³⁰ however there are currently further delays in the processing of permits.¹³¹ A lack of employment leads to the decline of the mental and physical health of many people as they suffer from isolation and social exclusion.¹³² Individuals are forced to rely on small state payments and remain living in IPAS centres¹³³ for prolonged periods instead of earning their own wage and building a new life in Ireland.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has found that asylum seekers face other challenges when seeking work after receiving their permit.¹³⁴ They often experience racism and discrimination throughout recruitment and employment and have to take employment in jobs that they are overqualified for,¹³⁵ meaning that they are working in jobs that are wholly unsuitable for them.

There are also logistical and practical issues faced by asylum seekers when attempting to access employment. The ESRI noted that many people struggle to find suitable childcare because of insufficient places in IPAS centres and Ireland's shortage of, and expensive, services.¹³⁶ It also reported that many IPAS centres are located in remote areas, meaning that, coupled with public transport issues, it is difficult for asylum seekers to be able to reach urban centres, where there are more job opportunities.¹³⁷

Ireland has made some progress on this matter. The International Protection Bill 2026,¹³⁸ while

¹³⁰ Labour Market Access Permission (Right to Work) (irishrefugeecouncil.ie)

<https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/get-help/information-hub/labour-market-access-permission-right-to-work/> accessed 16 February 2026.

¹³¹ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration: Labour Market Access Permission (irishimmigration.ie) <https://www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/labour-market-access-permission/> accessed 16 February 2026.

¹³² Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland: Living with Dignity: Right to Work: Submission on Extending a Right to Work to Persons Seeking Protection in Ireland (Working Paper) (2017) (jrs.ie) <https://jrs.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Living-with-Dignity-Right-to-Work-2017.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Economic & Social Research Institute: Labour Market Integration of International Protection Applicants in Ireland (esri.ie) <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS160.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026.

¹³⁵ Economic & Social Research Institute: Labour Market Integration of International Protection Applicants in Ireland (esri.ie), Chapter 5: Challenges and opportunities: 5.1 Structural Integration Challenges (2023) <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS160.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026.

¹³⁶ Economic & Social Research Institute: Labour Market Integration of International Protection Applicants in Ireland (esri.ie), Chapter 5: Challenges and opportunities: 5.3 Practical Challenges (2023) <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS160.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026.

¹³⁷ Economic & Social Research Institute: Labour Market Integration of International Protection Applicants in Ireland (esri.ie), Chapter 5: Challenges and opportunities: 5.1 Structural Integration Challenges (2023) <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS160.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026.

¹³⁸ International Protection Bill 2026.



problematic in other respects,¹³⁹ includes provisions that will allow asylum seekers to have the exact same employment rights as Irish citizens (which is in line with Article 15.3 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights¹⁴⁰), provide refugees with the ‘most favourable treatment’ regarding their right to work and continue to protect the self-employment rights of asylum seekers.¹⁴¹ Ireland has opted into the EU Migration and Asylum Pact,¹⁴² which specifically mentions the fast-tracking of allowing already-qualified asylum seekers to begin work as soon as possible, as well as a revised Single Permit Directive which provides a combined EU work and residence permit.¹⁴³

We request that Ireland is asked:

- Will it take the necessary steps to decrease the delays in the receiving of Labour Market Access Permits?
- Will it address the issues of racism and discrimination faced by refugees in recruitment processes and the workplace?

¹³⁹ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Overview of International Protection Bill 2026* (January 2026) <https://www.ihrec.ie/downloads/Overview-of-International-Protection-Bill-2026.pdf> accessed 18 February 2026.

¹⁴⁰ EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 15.3: “[n]ationals of third countries who are authorised to work in the territories of the Member States are entitled to working conditions equivalent to those of citizens of the Union.”

¹⁴¹ International Protection Bill 2026.

¹⁴² The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: implications for Ireland; Dr Caroline Sweeney (oireachtas.ie) <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/how-parliament-is-run/houses-of-the-oireachtas-service/library-and-research-service/research-matters/2025-04-08-the-eu-pact-on-migration-and-asylum-implications-for-ireland/> accessed 18 February 2026 .

¹⁴³ Ibid.



Access to Irish-medium Education

Irish is the first official language of the Republic of Ireland.¹⁴⁴ Despite its precedence in the Constitution, it is often treated as a minority language in its own country, as are its speakers, particularly in the context of education.

Access to Irish-medium education (IME) is noticeably lacking in comparison to its English counterpart, despite the Government's promise that 'high-quality Irish-medium education will be available to all who wish to choose it'.¹⁴⁵ Children who hope to retain their language proficiency at second level are presented with a paltry selection to choose from, with 264 out of 314 school planning districts not possessing a Gaelscholáiste,¹⁴⁶ and only 29 outside of the Gaeltacht.¹⁴⁷

Gaelscoileanna suffer from a decreased teacher retention rate, as the removal of the Irish-teaching allowance has made the job less desirable. 43% of Gaelscoileanna have reported long-term teacher vacancies, whereas mainstream schools only reported 10%.¹⁴⁸ With the removal of the Irish teaching allowance in 2011,¹⁴⁹ there is no incentive for teachers to take on the heavier workload associated with IME. This has led to more teachers who would have been inclined to teach through Irish to select English-medium education, as there are more readily available resources and teaching supports. Conversely, in countries where a similar immersion education system is in operation, such as Canada and New Zealand, recognition resembling this allowance is still provided.¹⁵⁰ Despite numerous requests from teaching organisations to reinstate this allowance, it is still being withheld.¹⁵¹

Within a human rights context, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Ireland has ratified, establishes that education of the child shall be directed to the 'cultural identity' and 'language and values',¹⁵² solidifying the Irish language's importance. Moreover, the International Covenant on

¹⁴⁴ Bunreacht na hÉireann, Article 8.1.

¹⁴⁵ Department of Education and Youth, *Policy for Irish-Medium Education outside of the Gaeltacht* (2025).

¹⁴⁶ Dáil Éireann, Dáil debates, Questions: Education Policy, Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD (12 February 2026) <https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2026-02-12a.239&s=gaelchol%C3%A1iste#g245> accessed 28 February 2026.

¹⁴⁷ Jamie McCarron, 'Government plans to boost Irish teaching to children' *The Irish Daily Mail* (7 November 2025).

¹⁴⁸ Adrianna Wrona, 'Special schools and those in disadvantaged areas worst hit by teacher shortages, new survey finds' *The Irish Independent* (3 November 2025).

¹⁴⁹ Concubhar Ó Liatháin, 'Lack of ambition in Government's new Gaeilge education policies criticised by Government MEP' *The Journal* (8 November 2025) (translated from Irish).

¹⁵⁰ 'Allowance for Teaching through Irish- Background and Reasoning' (*Gaeloideachas*, 23 October 2023) <https://gaeloideachas.ie/liuntas-don-teagasc-tri-ghaeilge-reasunaiocht-agus-riachtanas/> accessed 28 February 2026.

¹⁵¹ Jane Moore, 'Teachers say reintroduction of teaching-through-Irish allowance 'would make a massive difference' *The Journal* (27 January 2024).

¹⁵² Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) art 29 (c).



Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) also acknowledges the right to partake in cultural life.¹⁵³ This further protects the right to linguistic identity.

Ireland could benefit from following the example of the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain. 80% of Basque schoolchildren are educated in Basque-medium primary schools, thanks to education laws passed 1982, giving parents the choice of which language they wish their children to be educated in.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, teacher competency has been addressed by increased government investment providing sabbatical courses for teachers.¹⁵⁵ This immersion model has been highly successful, and has the potential to have a similar effect in Ireland, if proper commitment to the conservation of the language is upheld. The demand for IME is present, as surveys have shown that 25% of parents would choose IME if given the option.¹⁵⁶ Under the Education Act, the Government has previously vowed to respect the right of parents' to choose which school their children attend,¹⁵⁷ as well to as promote the language and cultural needs of students.¹⁵⁸ In its failure to satisfy the demand for IME, the Government is not adhering to its own Act. Education is a foundational pillar of the Irish language, and the Government, in its failure to nurture and conserve it, is endangering its future.

We request that Ireland is asked:

- How will it increase the availability of Irish-medium education (IME) for young people throughout the State?
- Will it consider re-introducing the Irish-teaching allowance and sabbatical courses for teachers to increase the availability of IME?

¹⁵³ ISECR art 15.

¹⁵⁴ Pádraig Ó Duibhir, 'Our Government aspires to boost education through Irish - yet student numbers have fallen for the first time in 50 years' *The Irish Times* (5 November 2024).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Education Act 1998, s 6(e).

¹⁵⁸ Education Act 1998 s 6(k).



English as a Second Language Supports

The European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 state that '[a] recipient who is a minor shall have access to primary and post-primary education in the like manner and to the extent in all respects as a minor who is an Irish citizen' and 'The minister for Education and Skills shall ensure that a recipient to whom paragraph (1) applies is provided with such support services and language supports as are necessary to facilitate the recipients access to, and participation in, the education referred to in that paragraph.'¹⁵⁹

In Ireland's third UPR, it was recommended that the State '[e]nsure fair and equal access for all children to quality education'.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, it was recommended that Ireland commit further to the integration of migrants in Irish society.¹⁶¹ Improvements to English as an Additional Language (EAL) supports or integration of asylum-seeking children exclusively in education were not suggested but remain a cause for concern in Ireland's education system.

Ireland's Migrant Integration Strategy identifies having sufficient language skills as key to facilitating participation in society.¹⁶² In 2024 the Department of Education conducted an inspection of EAL supports in schools and it was found that several primary and post-primary schools were not utilising the EAL support teachers in the correct manner. The Department's Report stated: 'Just under a half of the EAL legacy posts in the schools were being used exclusively to meet EAL needs. EAL legacy posts that were not used exclusively for EAL were used either as part of the school's special education team or, in a small number of schools, they were subsumed into the overall teaching allocation.'¹⁶³

In addition to ensuring that the language support required by asylum seeking children is provided, 'a crucial element to ensure that children from a minority background engage and succeed in

¹⁵⁹ The European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, Regulation 17.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'UPR of Ireland, 3rd Cycle

– 39th Session: Thematic list of recommendations' (ohchr.org), Recommendation 157.177 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 16 February 2026.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, Recommendation 157.258.

¹⁶² Department of Children, Disability and Equality, The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020 (Progress Report to Government Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration) (2021)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/publications/migrant-integration-strategy-2017-2020/> accessed 18 February 2026.

¹⁶³ Department of Education Inspectorate, 'Meeting Additional Language needs: Whole-school and Classroom Approaches for Inclusive Language Learning', (2024), 28 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/press-releases/department-of-education-inspectorate-publishes-findings-from-school-inspections-of-english-as-an-additional-language/> accessed 21 February 2026.



education settings is fostering a sense of belonging.’¹⁶⁴ It is important to include the culture and histories of both minority and majority students in the curriculum to build intercultural awareness and to encourage integration.¹⁶⁵ Leaving behind a life in their own country can have a critical impact on children who are forced to learn through a different curriculum where there is an absence of integration.¹⁶⁶

Ireland has devised an Intercultural Education Strategy which ‘respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership’.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, the Department of Education and Youth alongside the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) have established and implemented guidelines to assist primary and post-primary schools with teaching EAL, integration and diversity in schools. Ireland is certainly improving the Irish education curriculum to support asylum seeking children; however, outstanding issues persist regarding the implementation of these guidelines within schools. Further action is required to ensure that these guidelines are adopted throughout the entirety of the education system to guarantee significant and positive impacts for asylum seeking children.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, as of September 2024, ‘[t]he rate of arrivals of people seeking asylum in Ireland is at an all-time high, with the latest data indicating a more than 80 per cent increase in applications compared to the same period in 2023.’¹⁶⁸ The number of asylum seekers and refugees is increasing considerably, and the Department of Education must be prepared to provide training to teachers regularly to ensure that EAL supports are being utilized in the correct manner and that intercultural awareness is being built amongst students. The Government should monitor schools regularly to ensure that they are following the guidelines and committing to equality in education.

We request that Ireland is asked:

- How will Ireland strengthen educational support for asylum seeking students?
- How will Ireland ensure adequate EAL provision for asylum seeking students and that these supports are utilized correctly?

¹⁶⁴ National Centre for Guidance in Education, ‘Supporting and Including Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children in Education’, (2022) 12 <https://www.etbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NCGE-PP-Refugee-Asylum-Seeking-EN.pdf?x93798> accessed 21 February 2026.

¹⁶⁵ Shirley Martin, Deirdre Horgan, Jacqui O’Riordan & Reana Maier (2024) ‘Refugee and migrant children’s views of integration and belonging in school in Ireland – and the role of micro- and meso-level interactions’, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28:13, 3214-3233 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13603116.2023.2222304> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Department of Education and Youth, *Intercultural Education Strategy* (2021) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/intercultural-education-strategy/> accessed 27 February 2026.

¹⁶⁸ UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, *Ireland Fact Sheet* (September 2024) <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/sites/europe/files/2024-10/bi-annual-fact-sheet-2024-09-ireland.pdf> accessed 21 February 2026.



Socio-economic Discrimination in Education

During Ireland's third UPR in 2021, the right to education was addressed primarily in relation to vulnerable and marginalized groups such as the Traveller community and persons with disabilities.¹⁶⁹ Stakeholder submissions identified tenacious 'educational disadvantage', persistently among children who were homeless, seeking asylum, or in care.¹⁷⁰ A brief reference was made to how financial difficulties can act as a barrier to equal access to education. Disadvantages of children in low-income families have persistently been noted, as schools often request large sums of money posed as 'voluntary contributions'.¹⁷¹ While such concerns are undoubtedly relevant issues in Irish society, this review did not substantively examine the impact of socio-economic status on educational attainment, including disparities associated with private tuition and examination performance.

Ireland has repeatedly affirmed the right to equal education as fundamental. Article 42 of the Irish Constitution¹⁷² mandates free primary education. International treaty provisions such as Article 2 of protocol No.1 of the ECHR¹⁷³ and Article 28 of the UNCRC¹⁷⁴ have been ratified by Ireland, reinforcing the country's obligations to protect equality of education for all. Domestic legislation supports this objective, through the Education Act 1998¹⁷⁵ and the Equal Status Act 2000.¹⁷⁶ These legal provisions all confirm that children should undisputably be given a level access to education, along with the opportunity to work hard and pave their way through meritocracy.¹⁷⁷ Despite being so expressly stated, the reality of class and wealth being rewarded throughout Ireland's education system continues to prevail. Such comprehensive legal protections exist to combat this, but socioeconomic inequalities continue to influence educational capacities in Ireland, particularly through increasing reliance on private tutoring and fee-paying grind schools.

The state's recent budget has included a vow to 'take action to tackle educational disadvantage in

¹⁶⁹ United Nations Human Rights Council, *National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21: Ireland* (Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 39th session, 1-12 November 2021) UN Doc A/HRC/WG.6/39/IRL/1.

¹⁷⁰ UN OHCHR, *Summary of Stakeholders' submissions on Ireland*, UN Doc A/HRC/WG.6/39/IRL/3 (12 August 2021) para 85.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Article 42.

¹⁷³ European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Protocol No 1), opened for signature 4 November 1950, ETS 5 (entered into force 3 September 1953) art 2.

¹⁷⁴ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) UNTS 1577, Art 28.

¹⁷⁵ Education Act 1998.

¹⁷⁶ Equal Status Act 2011.

¹⁷⁷ Toby Napoletano, 'Meritocracy, meritocratic education, and equality of opportunity' (2024) 22 *Theory and Research in Education* 3-18, 3: "'Meritocracy'" refers to a particular view about distributive justice, according to which, roughly speaking, certain economic goods (jobs, income, wealth) ought to be distributed in accordance with people's merits. The idea is that people deserve various economic benefits in virtue of their merits.'



schools',¹⁷⁸ by expanding funding in areas such as the DEIS¹⁷⁹ programme. A €500 reduction from the €3000 3rd level contribution fees for 2026 was also agreed.¹⁸⁰ It is worth noting that this decision still provokes financial stress to those paying such fees; this is an increase from the 2025 fee, which had been reduced to €2000, from €3000.¹⁸¹ Despite decades of investment, education in Ireland is still shaped by social class.¹⁸²

Many reliable sources emphasise persistent educational inequalities in Ireland. It has been reported that individuals who have grown up in poverty-stricken environments are at higher risk of material deprivation and experiencing financial difficulties during adulthood.¹⁸³ This can be linked to the fact that students from affluent backgrounds tend to dominate high points courses, which often result in easier employment and subsequent financial stability.¹⁸⁴ Although a minority of children from working class backgrounds may be able to succeed relative to their wealthier peers, this is not

¹⁷⁸ Minister for Education and Youth Helen McEntee and Minister of State Michael Moynihan, 'Ministers McEntee and Moynihan announce details of €13.1 billion education and youth funding in Budget 2026' (Department of Education and Youth, 8 October 2025) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/press-releases/ministers-mcentee-and-moynihan-announce-details-of-131-billion-education-and-youth-funding-in-budget-2026/> accessed 24 February 2026.

¹⁷⁹ Department of Education, *DEIS Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (27 February 2020, last updated 6 November 2025) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/policy-information/deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/> accessed 27 February 2026.

¹⁸⁰ Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 'Minister Lawless announces first ever permanent cut to student contribution fee, major increase in SUSI grants and the income threshold, and record investment in apprenticeships' (8 October 2025) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-further-and-higher-education-research-innovation-and-science/press-releases/minister-lawless-announces-first-ever-permanent-cut-to-student-contribution-fee-major-increase-in-susi-grants-and-the-income-threshold-and-record-investment-in-apprenticeships/> accessed 24 October 2026.

¹⁸¹ Andrew Walsh, 'Permanent €500 cut to college fees announced- but it will still cost you more than last year' (*TheJournal.ie*, 7 October 2025) <https://www.thejournal.ie/college-fee-permanent-reduction-budget-2026-6837327-Oct2025/> accessed 24 February 2026.

¹⁸² Judith Harford and Brian Fleming, 'Education in Ireland still shaped by social class despite decades of investment' *The Irish Times* (Dublin, 15 March 2022) <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/education-in-ireland-still-shaped-by-social-class-despite-decades-of-investment-1.4827899> accessed 26 February 2026.

¹⁸³ Economic and Social Research Institute, 'Childhood poverty associated with higher risk of material deprivation and income poverty in Irish adults' (ESRI, 17 October 2022) <https://www.esri.ie/news/childhood-poverty-associated-with-higher-risk-of-material-deprivation-and-income-poverty-in> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹⁸⁴ Carl O'Brien, 'Class gap: More affluent students dominate high-points courses' *The Irish Times* (Dublin, 7 December 2020) <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/class-gap-more-affluent-students-dominate-high-points-courses-1.4429048> accessed 25 February 2026.



feasible for the majority of students in Ireland.¹⁸⁵ The OECD has conducted similar research to underscore the difficulties facing students from underprivileged backgrounds.¹⁸⁶ It appears that money can be used to manipulate this system; around 55% of Leaving Certificate students take grinds, with children from wealthier families much more likely to receive them.¹⁸⁷ The Irish Times have reported that children of professionals get an average of 464 points compared with 326 for those born to so-called 'lowest-skilled' parents.¹⁸⁸ This system amplifies inequality, creating an irrevocable cycle of ever-worsening division in class and wealth in Ireland. Kathleen Lynch, a former Irish Human Rights and Equality Commissioner, has emphasised that equalising opportunity is vital in promoting fairness in the competition for advantage.¹⁸⁹ The increasing commodification of supplementary education undermines equality of opportunity and normalizes injustice as an element of everyday life.

We request that Ireland is asked:

- Will Ireland assess the overall equality impact of the leaving cert points system?
- Will the state expand targeted financial supports for students from lower income households?
- Will further reforms be introduced prevent excessive reliance on supplementary education?

¹⁸⁵ Kathleen Lynch and Margaret Crean, 'Economic Inequality and Class Privilege in Education: Why Equality of Economic condition Is Essential for Equality of Opportunity' in Judith Harford(ed), *Education for All? The Legacy of Free Post Primary Education in Ireland* (Peter Lang 2018).

¹⁸⁶ OECD, *OECD Review of Resourcing Schools to Address Educational Disadvantage in Ireland* (OECD Reviews of National Policies for Education, OECD Publishing, Paris 2024) <https://doi.org/10.1787/3433784c-en> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹⁸⁷ James Wilson, 'Leaving Cert grinds "reinforcing inequality" in education - ESRI' Newstalk (13 September 2024) <https://www.newstalk.com/news/leaving-cert-grinds-reinforcing-inequality-in-education-esri-1764576> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹⁸⁸ Carl O'Brien, 'Leaving Cert class divide of 138 points linked with students' family backgrounds' *The Irish Times* (29 June 2024) <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/education/2024/06/29/leaving-cert-class-divide-of-138-points-linked-with-students-family-backgrounds/> access 27 February 2026

¹⁸⁹ Kathleen Lynch and Margaret Crean, 'Economic Inequality and Class Privilege in Education: Why Equality of Economic condition Is Essential for Equality of Opportunity' in Judith Harford(ed), *Education for All? The Legacy of Free Post Primary Education in Ireland* (Peter Lang 2018).

Ensuring Education Equity for Out-of-School Students

The right to education is enshrined in Article 42 of the Irish Constitution.¹⁹⁰ However, for children unable to attend school, whether due to disability, prolonged illness, or mental health challenges, the enjoyment of this right is harder to achieve. Obstacles to accessing alternative provisions exacerbate pre-existing barriers, further disrupting the education of these students.

In Ireland's third UPR, several countries issued recommendations to Ireland regarding access to education.¹⁹¹ Recommendations included taking action to ensure fair and equal access for all children to quality education,¹⁹² eliminating obstacles to education for persons with disabilities,¹⁹³ and offering enhanced flexibility in the education system.¹⁹⁴ Following Ireland's 2024 mid-term report,¹⁹⁵ it is evident that the implementation of these recommendations remains stagnant, with minimal progress being made thus far. Specifically, the fourth National Access Plan 2022-2028,¹⁹⁶ and the upcoming National Disability Strategy, while both aiming to support inclusion and further implementation of the UNCRPD,¹⁹⁷ reflect a consistent trend of planning for positive change without practical execution.

Article 24 of the UNCRPD recognises the right of persons with disabilities to education,¹⁹⁸ stipulating their inclusion in the general education system,¹⁹⁹ and the provision of reasonable accommodation.²⁰⁰ Similarly, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004, sets out the legal framework for the education of children with special educational needs.²⁰¹ It provides that such children be educated inclusively, where possible, alongside their peers,²⁰² and have the same right to access and benefit from education as children who don't have these needs.²⁰³ While these instruments theoretically protect disadvantaged students' right to education, their domestic unenforceability leaves students vulnerable in practice. As a dualist legal system, Ireland is bound by international treaties like the UNCRPD at an international level; however,

¹⁹⁰ Article 42.

¹⁹¹ UN OHCHR, 'UPR of Ireland (3rd Cycle – 39th Session), Matrice/Thematic list of recommendations' (ohchr.org) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹⁹² Ibid, Recommendation 157.177.

¹⁹³ Ibid, Recommendation 157.240.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, Recommendation 157.215.

¹⁹⁵ Ireland, 'Universal Periodic Review: National Mid-Term Report 2024' (February 2024) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-implementation> accessed 25 February 2026.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, Recommendation 157.173.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, Recommendation 157.239.

¹⁹⁸ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted 13 December 2006, entered into force 3 May 2008) 2515 UNTS 3 (UNCRPD) art 24.

¹⁹⁹ UNCRPD, art 24(2)(a).

²⁰⁰ UNCRPD, art 24(2)(c).

²⁰¹ Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

²⁰² Ibid, s 2.

²⁰³ Ibid, s 13(3)(b).



without formal incorporation into domestic legislation, they lack enforceability within national courts. Meanwhile, the EPSEN Act remains unenforceable due to Ministers for Education failing to commence 18 sections of the Act.²⁰⁴ A key concern raised by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in its 2025 report on Ireland and the UNCRPD was the widespread denial of inclusive education.²⁰⁵

For students who are unable to attend school, pathways are severely limited, rendering the continuation of their education more onerous. Under the Education Act 1998,²⁰⁶ the Minister for Education must ensure the availability of support services and education quality appropriate to meet the needs and abilities of those with disabilities and special educational needs. This Act provides the Minister with the necessary authority to fund Home Tuition Grants as a supplementary provision for children unable to attend school, ensuring the realisation of their constitutional right.²⁰⁷

The Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2025/2026 - Special Education Component is provided for young children with autism, children seeking a Special School or Special Class placement, students with a significant medical condition or students with school phobia or associated depression or anxiety.²⁰⁸ According to the current Minister for Education, 1,240 children were approved for Home Tuition as of 22 January 2026;²⁰⁹ of this total, 455 fell into the medical and mental health groups, respectively.²¹⁰ The unequal distribution of hours across different eligibility categories exacerbates the educational disadvantage faced by certain students. Under the scheme,²¹¹ students who meet the criteria for the medical condition or mental health component can receive a maximum of 10 hours of tuition per week, constituting a significant reduction compared to the standard instructional hours afforded to students in mainstream education. This 10-hour limit is wholly inadequate for the demands of the Leaving Certificate, forcing families to pay tutors privately to ensure curricula are completed.

²⁰⁴ AsiAm, 'AsiAm's Explainer on Department of Education's EPSEN Act Review' (*AsiAm*, 25 June 2025) <https://asiam.ie/policy-news/asiams-explainer-on-department-of-educations-epsen-act-review> accessed 2 March 2026.

²⁰⁵ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 'State Failures Fuel Ongoing Rights Violations Against Disabled People: International Monitoring Mechanism Warns in New Report' (2 July 2025) <https://www.ihrec.ie/news-press/state-failures-fuel-ongoing-rights-violations-against-disabled-people-international-monitoring-mechanism-warns-in-new-report> accessed 2 March 2026.

²⁰⁶ Education Act 1998.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, s 7(2)(a).

²⁰⁸ Department of Education, 'Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2025/2026 – Special Education Component' (Circular 0047/2025, 2025).

²⁰⁹ Dáil Debates, 27 January 2026, Written Answer 1198 <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2026-01-27a.1198&s=%22home+tuition%22#g1199.q>.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹¹ Department of Education, 'Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2025/2026 – Special Education Component' (Circular 0047/2025, 2025).



We request that Ireland be asked:

- Will it incorporate the UNCRPD into Irish law and commence all sections of the EPSEN Act?
- Will it introduce guidelines to help families navigate these circumstances?
- Will it increase Home Tuition hours granted to students?
- Will it increase public awareness of the Home Tuition Scheme, ensuring those eligible can avail of the support quickly, thereby minimising the educational impact of prolonged absence?



The Rights of Older Persons in Residential Care

This submission addresses the protection of the rights of older persons in residential care facilities in Ireland. Ireland's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) require the state to take positive measures to prevent degrading or inhuman treatment,²¹² safeguard dignity²¹³ and guarantee access to quality healthcare²¹⁴ and long term care. Therefore, residential care should function within a robust legal and regulatory framework, capable of preventing, identifying, investigating and addressing abuse or neglect.²¹⁵

Prior to Ireland's Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) (39th session, 2021),²¹⁶ the United Nations (UN) Committee Against Torture (CAT) expressed concern that 'older persons and other vulnerable adults' in residential care were being held in situations of *de facto* detention that may amount to cruel or degrading treatment.²¹⁷ While Ireland accepted general recommendations in the previous UPR cycle²¹⁸ in relation to the safeguarding of vulnerable persons, the CAT recommended efficient investigation and redress mechanisms, as well as independent monitoring of residential care settings. Nevertheless, Ireland still lacks a thorough legal framework for adult safeguarding,²¹⁹ which would protect vulnerable and older persons in such situations.

Since the previous cycle in 2021, further official data has been released, which illustrates that risks to older people in care remain significant.²²⁰ In 2023, the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Safeguarding Office Annual Report recorded a total of 18,290 safeguarding concerns. Of these 5,582 relate to adults of 65 years and over; this figure represents a 13% increase from 2022.²²¹ Additionally, reports concerning persons of 80 and over increased by 32%.²²² Residential and nursing home referrals rose by approximately 4,000, indicating a rising number of older individuals having to report

²¹² Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights, as amended) (adopted 4 November 1950, entered into force 3 September 1953) ETS 5, Art 3.

²¹³ *Ibid*, Art 8.

²¹⁴ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted 13 December 2006, entered into force 3 May 2008) 2515 UNTS 3, art 25..

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, Art 16.

²¹⁶ UN Human Rights Council, *Compilation on Ireland: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 39th sess, UN Doc A/HRC/WG.6/39/IRL/2 (16 August 2021) para 59.

²¹⁷ Committee Against Torture, *Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Ireland*, UN Doc CAT/C/IRL/CO/2 (2017), paras 35–36.

²¹⁸ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ireland*, 48th sess, UN Doc A/HRC/48/17 (2021).

²¹⁹ Law Reform Commission, *Report on a Regulatory Framework for Adult Safeguarding* (LRC 128–2024, 2024).

²²⁰ Health Service Executive, *National Safeguarding Office Annual Report 2023* (2024) 12–18.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 15.

²²² *Ibid*, 17.



abuse or neglect.²²³

More recently in 2025, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) published interim findings into the standard of care at two private nursing homes in Ireland. 198 reports alleging suspected or confirmed abuse of residents at these care facilities were reported between 2022 to 2025.²²⁴ Furthermore, they conducted 840 inspections of nursing homes and recalled recurring non-compliance in safeguarding and the rights of residents.²²⁵ Moreover, 28 An Garda Síochána referrals related to nursing homes were recorded by the HIQA in 2024,²²⁶ indicating abuse severe enough to necessitate criminal investigation.

The absence of a specific statutory adult safeguarding framework has consistently been criticised by civil society organisations such as the Irish Association of Social Workers²²⁷ and Sage Advocacy.²²⁸ They emphasise that this results in a substantial regulatory gap and permits inadequate statutory duties regarding reporting obligations and investigative powers, which should be mandated within residential care facilities.²²⁹ Accordingly, the adoption of specific adult safeguarding laws was suggested in the Law Reform Commission's 2024 Report on a Regulatory Framework for Adult Safeguarding.²³⁰

Under the ECHR, Article 3 obliges the state to take positive measures in preventing inhuman or degrading treatment²³¹ in any setting. The protection of personal dignity and autonomy resides under Article 8.²³² Article 5 of the CRPD protects persons with disabilities from exploitation violence and abuse,²³³ a category often overlapping with older persons in residential care. Finally, the right to health, including long-term care is guaranteed in Article 12 ICESCR.²³⁴

Our neighbouring country, England, has operated under its Care Act since 2014,²³⁵ which established safeguarding duties and obligatory safeguarding adult boards.²³⁶ Correspondingly in Scotland,

²²³ *Ibid*, 18.

²²⁴ Health Information and Quality Authority, *Interim Findings on Nursing Home Standards* (2025) 5

²²⁵ Health Information and Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2024* (2025) 9.

²²⁶ *Ibid*.

²²⁷ Irish Association of Social Workers, *Adult Safeguarding in Ireland: Position Paper* (2023) 4

²²⁸ Sage Advocacy, *Submission on Adult Safeguarding Policy* (2023) 2.

²²⁹ *Ibid*.

²³⁰ Law Reform Commission, *Regulatory Framework for Adult Safeguarding* (LRC 2024) 12.

²³¹ European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (adopted 4 Nov 1950, entered into force 3 Sep 1953) ETS 5, art 3.

²³² *ibid*, art 8.

²³³ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted 13 Dec 2006, entered into force 3 May 2008) 2515 UNTS 3, art 16.

²³⁴ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 Dec 1966, entered into force 3 Jan 1976) 993 UNTS 3, art 12.

²³⁵ Care Act 2014, c 23, s 42.

²³⁶ *Ibid* s 43.



enforceable protection orders and investigatory powers are attainable through the adult support and protection Act 2007.²³⁷ A structural gap persists in Ireland due to the absence of equivalent legislation.²³⁸

We request that Ireland is asked:

- Will it adopt a comprehensive adult safeguarding act with clear statutory obligations and protection orders in all residential care settings?
- Will it enhance HIQA's enforcement capabilities, such as its ability to require corrective action and gain access to private nursing homes?
- Will it provide older persons or their representatives with independent, accessible complaint and investigation procedures free from retaliation?

²³⁷ Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, asp 10, ss 7-10, 11-22.

²³⁸ Law Reform Commission, *Report on a Regulatory Framework for Adult Safeguarding* (LRC 2024).



Ireland's Failure to Take Every Measure to Prevent Genocide in Gaza: US use of Shannon Airport

In Ireland's 3rd UPR Cycle, no countries brought forth recommendations on the Irish Government's position and actions to prevent genocide. However, with the escalation of the Gaza War since October 2023 and the declaration of genocide in Gaza by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the prevention of genocide has become paramount.²³⁹ The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as 'any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: Killing members of the group, Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'.²⁴⁰

Ireland is complicit in the ongoing genocide as the US military has use of Shannon Airport. Indications are emerging that weaponry is being flown from the US to Israel as they wage unjust war upon the Palestinian people. Dr. Edward Horgan, a retired Defence Forces member, has said that the contents of these aircraft is 'most likely going to Israel' and rejected governmental assurance that munitions are not Israel bound, stating that '[t]he fact that flights don't go directly to Israel doesn't necessarily mean what's in them is not being delivered to Israel.'²⁴¹ *The Ditch* reported in October 2025 that the State had finally admitted that it has allowed weapons through Shannon to Israel; Minister for Transport, Darragh O'Brien had granted permission to a civilian aircraft carrying munitions from the US Department of War to an IDF base. On October 12th, Omni Air aircraft (N423AX) landed in the Clare airport, stopping again in Athens before reaching its final destination, Nevatim Israel Defence Forces airbase.²⁴²

Perhaps more worrying still, very few, if any, applications for the use of Irish airspace are denied and aircraft granted permission to land in Shannon are rarely subject to inspection. Only 0.1% of applications from US civil aircraft were refused permission to land or fly over Ireland due to the 'nature of the total munitions of war proposed to be carried', the Department of Transport has stated.²⁴³ Prior to her election, now President Connolly pleaded with the Government while speaking in the University of Galway to 'start inspecting the planes at Shannon Airport', arguing that Ireland

²³⁹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission finds' (*ohchr.org*, 16 September 2025) [Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission finds | OHCHR](#) accessed 23 February 2026.

²⁴⁰ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide [1948] 78 UNTS 277.

²⁴¹ Tadhg McNally, 'US military flights landing at Shannon 'seriously undermining' Irish neutrality, says TD' *Irish Examiner* (Ireland, 02 September 2024) <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-41467891.html>.

²⁴² 'State admits it's allowed weapons through Ireland to Israel' *The Ditch* (Ireland, 17 October 2025) <https://www.ontheditch.com/state-admits/>.

²⁴³ Jackie Fox, 'Nearly 2,000 US military flights stopped in Ireland over three years' *RTÉ NEWS* (Dublin, 30 May 2025) <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2025/0530/1515801-us-military-flights/> accessed 23 February 2026.



‘cannot take the word of our allies that arms are not going through that airport’.²⁴⁴ While answering parliamentary questions in 2024, then Minister for Foreign Affairs Michéal Martin admitted that ‘foreign military aircraft which are given permission to land in Ireland are not subject to inspection in this regard. Sovereign immunity, a long-standing principle of customary international law, means that a state may not exercise its jurisdiction in respect to another state or its property, including state and military aircraft.’²⁴⁵ The prevention of genocide surely supersedes a warmonger-enabling custom.

While not directly enabling Genocide in Gaza, allowing the USA the use of Shannon Airport to deport ‘illegal aliens’ appears to further contribute to the abuse of the Palestinian people, many of whom are seeking refuge from the carpet bombing in their homeland, which the Irish government is enabling through the military use of Shannon. There have been reports of Palestinians abducted from their families in the US and ‘bound in shackles, sitting aboard an aircraft on Irish soil’ while waiting to be abandoned in the Occupied West Bank.²⁴⁶

We request that Ireland:

- Eases the number of aircrafts allowed the use of Irish airspace.
- Implements stricter inspections of planes landing in Shannon Airport.
- Rescinds ICE’s permission to refuel in the Clare airport while deporting Palestinian people.

²⁴⁴ Andrew Hamilton, ‘Connolly says State should search the Shannon planes’ *The Clare Champion* (Clare, 9 October 2025).

²⁴⁵ Dáil Éireann, Díospóireachtaí na Dála, Military Aircraft, Mairéad Farrell TD (09 September 2024) [Military Aircraft – Monday, 9 Sep 2024 – Ceisteanna Parlaiminte \(33rd Dáil\) – Tithe an Oireachtais](#) accessed 28 February 2026.

²⁴⁶ Colin Sheridan, ‘Shannon Airport and ICE deportation flights raise fresh questions over Irish neutrality’ *Irish Examiner* (Ireland, 14 February 2026) <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-41792807.html>; Harry Davies, Alice Speri & Sufian Taha, ‘Revealed: Private jet owned by Trump friend used by ICE to deport Palestinians to West Bank’ *The Guardian* (London, 5 February 2026) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/05/revealed-private-jet-owned-by-trump-friend-used-by-ice-to-deport-palestinians-to-west-bank>; Shannon Watch, ‘Shackled Palestinian Men on Plane at Shannon’ (ShannonWatch.org, 6 February) <https://shannonwatch.org/content/shackled-palestinian-men-planes-shannon> accessed 01 March 2026.



The United States' use of Shannon Airport to refuel while performing allegedly unlawful deportations of Palestinians

In Ireland's first Universal Periodic Review, NGOs raised concerns regarding the alleged use of Shannon Airport by the United States for rendition-related flights.²⁴⁷ It is now being reported that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is using Shannon Airport to refuel while performing deportations to the West Bank.²⁴⁸ It appears, further, that ICE is committing human rights abuses within the USA by denying detainees their rights to a fair trial and making unlawful arrests.²⁴⁹

At the beginning of this year, ICE began to use Shannon while deporting, specifically, Palestinians.²⁵⁰ Two such flights have been reported.²⁵¹ A civilian-owned plane was chartered by ICE to bring Palestinian men to the West Bank, where they reportedly had no connections, and they refuelled in Shannon Airport.²⁵² The Irish government faced questions from TDs who were criticising the issue.²⁵³ The Government responded that no authorisation was required for such a flight, as it was a civilian

²⁴⁷ Amnesty International 'Ireland: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review, 12th Session of the UPR Working Group, October 2001' (Amnesty International, October 2001)

<https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/eur290032011en.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026; Shannonwatch (Ireland), 'Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Ireland: Twelfth Session of the Working Group on the UPR' (October 2011) <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session12/IE/SWatch-Shannonwatch-eng.pdf> accessed 22 February 2026.

²⁴⁸ Gearldine McKelvie, 'Use of Irish airport for US deportation flights to Israel called "reprehensible"' (*The Guardian*, 7 February 2026)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/07/use-of-irish-shannon-airport-for-us-deportation-flights-to-israel-called-reprehensible> accessed 22 February 2026.

²⁴⁹ Erica Bryant 'What does "Due Process" Mean for Immigrants and Why is it Important?' (*Vera Institute of Justice*, 4 June 2025)

<https://www.vera.org/news/what-does-due-process-mean-for-immigrants-and-why-is-it-important> accessed 22 February 2026.

²⁵⁰ Conor Gallagher, 'Shannon Airport used for refueling Ice deportation flights 10 times in past year' (*The Irish Times*, 9 February 2026)

<https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/2026/02/09/shannon-airport-used-for-refuelling-ice-deportation-flights-10-times-in-past-year/> accessed 23 February 2026.

²⁵¹ Gearldine McKelvie, 'Use of Irish airport for US deportation flights to Israel called "reprehensible"' (*The Guardian*, 7 February 2026)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/feb/07/use-of-irish-shannon-airport-for-us-deportation-flights-to-israel-called-reprehensible> accessed 22 February 2026.

²⁵² Harry Davies 'Revealed: Private jet owned by Trump friend used by ICE to deport Palestinians to West Bank' (*The Guardian*, 5 February 2026) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/05/revealed-private-jet-owned-by-trump-friend-used-by-ice-to-deport-palestinians-to-west-bank> accessed 23 February 2026.

²⁵³ Dáil Éireann, Dáil debates, Questions: Immigration Policy, Paul Murphy TD (18 February 2026)

<https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2026-02-18a.93&s=shannon+airport#g94.q> accessed 24 February 2026.



aircraft under Article 5 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation.²⁵⁴

Amnesty International warns that '[t]he US Trump administration's cruel and inhumane mass deportation campaign must be denied any form of facilitation by Ireland to the degree that is legally possible.'²⁵⁵ Shannon Watch argues that just like during the rendition flights, 'our government now appears to be turning a blind eye to illegal US kidnapping and torture flights'.²⁵⁶

Ireland is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states in Article 7: 'No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'.²⁵⁷ Ireland has also ratified the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT).²⁵⁸ Ireland has prohibited refoulement, which it is obligated to do under the aforementioned treaties and under Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention,²⁵⁹ and this prohibition was reinforced through the International Protection Act 2015.²⁶⁰ Additionally, Ireland is bound by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which states in Article 3: 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'.²⁶¹

Ireland has jurisdiction over all persons in the State, even temporarily; the State's human rights law obligations under the ICCPR, UNCAT and ECHR apply to all persons in the State, irrespective of their nationality and the nationality of the aircraft they may be travelling in.²⁶² International human rights law recognises that a state may incur responsibility for facilitating the conduct of another state where it reasonably ought to know that such conduct may lead to human rights violations.²⁶³ Ireland has an obligation to take reasonable measures to ensure that the facilitation of human rights violations is not being carried out in the state.

²⁵⁴ Dáil Éireann, Dáil debates, Questions: Immigration Policy, Darragh O'Brien TD (18 February 2026) <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2026-02-18a.93&s=shannon+airport#g94.q> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁵⁵ Amnesty International, 'Ireland must not be a link in the cruel chain of ICE deportations' (*Amnesty International*, 9 February 2026)

https://www.amnesty.ie/shannon_airport_must_not_be_a_link_in_the_cruel_chain_of_ice_deportations/ accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁵⁶ Shannon Watch 'Shackled Palestinian Men on Plane at Shannon' (*Shannon Watch*, 6 February 2026) <https://www.shannonwatch.org/content/shackled-palestinian-men-planes-shannon> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁵⁷ Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (adopted 10 December 1984, entered into force 26 June 1987) 1465 UNTS 85.

²⁵⁸ Criminal Justice (United Nations Convention Against Torture) Act 2000.

²⁵⁹ Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954) 189 UNTS 137, art 33.

²⁶⁰ International Protection Act 2015.

²⁶¹ Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights, as amended) (adopted 4 November 1950, entered into force 3 September 1953) ETS No 5, art 3.

²⁶² Bunreacht na hÉireann, Article 40.1.

²⁶³ *El-Masri v North Macedonia* (2013) 57 EHRR 25.



The circumstances of the Palestinian men being deported to a territory in which they might face grave human rights abuse at the hands of Israel,²⁶⁴ and its apparent facilitation by the Irish Government, are deeply concerning.²⁶⁵ The abundance of reporting on ICE's alleged human rights offences in the USA²⁶⁶ and the devastating treatment by Israel of Palestinians in the West Bank²⁶⁷ displays that Ireland reasonably ought to know of the risks of facilitating them. By relying solely on aviation law²⁶⁸ rather than scrutinising the human rights aspects of these flights, Ireland risks failing to fulfil its obligations to prevent human rights abuses within its jurisdiction.

It is requested that Ireland be recommended:

- To introduce legislation to stop automatic landing clearance for civilian planes being operated by foreign governmental agencies which are at risk of possible human rights violations.
- To exercise its authority under international human rights law to inspect aircraft attached to credible allegations of human rights abuses, and guarantee protection for any person found to be at risk of suffering serious human rights violations.

²⁶⁴ Sen. Patricia Stephenson, 'Government must investigate ICE deportation Facilitated by Shannon Airport' (*The Social Democrats*, 6 February 2026)

<https://www.socialdemocrats.ie/government-must-investigate-ice-deportation-facilitated-by-shannon-airport/> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁶⁵ Harry Davies, 'Revealed: Private jet owned by Trump friend used by ICE to deport Palestinians to West Bank' (*The Guardian*, 5 February 2026) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/05/revealed-private-jet-owned-by-trump-friend-used-by-ice-to-deport-palestinians-to-west-bank> accessed 23 February 2026.

²⁶⁶ Erica Bryant, 'What does "Due Process" Mean for Immigrants and Why is it Important?' (*Vera Institute of Justice*, 4 June 2025) <https://www.vera.org/news/what-does-due-process-mean-for-immigrants-and-why-is-it-important> accessed 22 February 2026.

²⁶⁷ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Ethnic cleansing concerns in Gaza and West bank Amid Intensified violence and forcible transfers by Israel – UN report' (*United Nations Human Rights*, 19 February) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/ethnic-cleansing-concerns-gaza-and-west-bank-amid-intensified-violence-and> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁶⁸ Dáil Éireann, Dáil debates, Questions: Immigration Policy, Darragh O'Brien TD (18 February 2026) <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2026-02-18a.93&s=shannon+airport#g94.q> accessed 24 February 2026.



Irish Trade with Israel: A Lack of Political Urgency

The ongoing human rights crisis in Gaza requires urgent political and legal action. In September 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem officially reported that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians²⁶⁹ under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.²⁷⁰ Ireland is a party to the Genocide Convention. In July 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) published an advisory opinion in which it declared Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories unlawful.²⁷¹ According to this judgment, Ireland has an obligation to reduce economic cooperation with Israel. At paragraph 278 of the judgment, the ICJ finds that all UN member states must 'abstain from entering into economic or trade dealings with Israel concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory or parts thereof which may entrench its unlawful presence in the territory'.

The Occupied Territories Bill is a proposed bill to ban Irish trade with illegal Israeli settlements.²⁷² In its initial form as a Private Member's (opposition) Bill, it was intended to include both goods and services; however the Irish Government introduced its own Israeli Settlements (Prohibition of Importation of Goods) Bill 2025.²⁷³ The Government's Bill has received much criticism from civil society for the exclusion of services, which account for a large portion of trade between Ireland and Israel.²⁷⁴ Meanwhile, objectors to the passing of the Bill as a whole, particularly the US, argue that the economic repercussions would be harmful to businesses based in Ireland.²⁷⁵ Israeli ambassador

²⁶⁹ OHCHR, 'Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission finds' (OHCHR, 16 September 2025) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁷⁰ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (adopted 9 December 1948, entered into force 12 January 1951) 78 UNTS 277.

²⁷¹ International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, 'Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem' <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-jud-01-00-en.pdf> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁷² Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2018/6/> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁷³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *General Scheme of the Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Prohibition of Importation of Goods) Bill 2025* (25 June 2025) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-foreign-affairs/publications/general-scheme-of-the-israeli-settlements-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-prohibition-of-importation-of-goods-bill-2025/> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁷⁴ Dáil Éireann, Dáil debates, Written Answers: Trade Data, Simon Coveney, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (7 November 2023) <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2023-11-07/409/> accessed 25 February 2026.

²⁷⁵ Ishika Tanwar, 'Ireland urged to advance 'Occupied Territories' bill despite US pressure' (*Jurist News*, 21 July 2025) <https://www.jurist.org/news/2025/07/ireland-urged-to-advance-occupied-territories-bill-despite-us-pressure/> accessed 27 February 2026.



Dana Erlich classified the draft legislation as ‘anti-Israeli’.²⁷⁶ However, the economic impact of the Bill would in fact be relatively minor.²⁷⁷ Additionally, Deputy Smith of the Labour Party reports that ‘[o]ver 400 Irish legal experts have stated clearly that including services in the ban is legally sound. The only thing missing is political will.’²⁷⁸

Various legal experts and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have highlighted the importance of this Bill in the campaign against Israel’s grave, widespread and systematic human rights and humanitarian law violations in Palestine. Oxfam Ireland described the ‘economic activity in Israel’s illegal settlements’ as ‘a key enabler of continued occupation and displacement of Palestinians.’²⁷⁹ The persistent delay in passing the Bill is most concerning and is attracting criticism from opposition political parties and NGOs alike. Holly Cairns, leader of the Social Democrats, claims the Government is trying to ‘gut and shelve’ the Bill.²⁸⁰ It is imperative that Ireland passes this Bill to act in accordance with our international law obligations. The Bill is included under ‘priority publication’ in the Government’s legislative programme, yet the lack of progress regarding the Bill clearly contradicts this.

There is need for fundamental action against Israel to deter the human rights and humanitarian law violations it is perpetrating in Gaza, and economic isolation is one such action. Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, has clearly stated that ‘[e]conomic cooperation has fuelled the Israeli economy, which has profited from the illegal occupation and genocide’.²⁸¹

With 74% of Irish people in support of the passing of the Occupied Territories Bill, the Irish Government needs to act without further delay. Bríd McGrath, head of Public Affairs at Oxfam Ireland has observed: ‘Irish people want to know our hands are clean in this conflict. We don’t want to be

²⁷⁶Muiris O’Cearbhaill, ‘Israeli ambassador ‘disappointed’ over Occupied Territories Bill review’ (24 October 2024) *The Journal* <https://www.thejournal.ie/israeli-ambassador-occupied-territories-bill-6523526-Oct2024/> accessed 1 March 2026.

²⁷⁷ Cormac McQuinn, ‘What is the Occupied Territories Bill, why did it stall and can it be revived now?’ (15 October 2024) *Irish Times* <https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2024/10/15/what-is-the-occupied-territories-bill-why-did-it-stall-and-can-it-be-revived-now/> accessed 28 February 2026.

²⁷⁸ Duncan Smith, ‘Labour slams Government’s weak Occupied Territories Bill’ (*Labour*, 25 June 2025) <https://labour.ie/news/2025/06/25/labour-slams-governments-weak-occupied-territories-bill/> accessed 27 February 2026.

²⁷⁹ Kate Brayden, ‘Occupied Territories Bill: Where do we stand?’ (*Oxfam Ireland*, 16 October 2024) <https://www.oxfamireland.org/blog/occupied-territories-bill-where-do-we-stand> accessed 26 February 2026.

²⁸⁰ Christina Finn, ‘Still no timeline for Occupied Territories Bill as minister says she’s awaiting AG advice’ (10 February 2026) *The Journal* <https://www.thejournal.ie/occupied-territories-bill-8-6952632-Feb2026/> accessed 26 February 2026.

²⁸¹ United Nations General Assembly, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese: Gaza Genocide: a collective crime’ UN Doc A/80/492 (20 October 2025) para 3.



complicit in any way with illegal Israeli occupation.’²⁸² The Government has a responsibility to ensure the desires of the public are respected and fulfilled.

It is difficult to justify the delay and alteration of this Bill to date. With such important political and economic consequences regarding the human rights of Palestinians, a progressive and typically leading nation in human rights advocacy should immediately pass this Bill to full effect.

For these reasons, we request that Ireland is asked:

- Will Ireland reinstate a ban on services into the Occupied Territories Bill?
- Why has there been such a significant delay in passing the Occupied Territories Bill?
- When is the Bill expected to be passed?

²⁸² Christina Finn, ‘Still no timeline for Occupied Territories Bill as minister says she’s awaiting AG advice’ (10 February 2026) The Journal <https://www.thejournal.ie/occupied-territories-bill-8-6952632-Feb2026/> accessed 26 February 2026.



Ireland's Support of Palestinian Higher Education

Genocide consists of any one of a set of specific prohibited acts carried out with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group: killing members of the group, causing them serious harm; deliberately subjecting the group to living conditions designed to bring about its physical destruction; imposing measures intended to prevent births; or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.²⁸³

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem has advanced the assessment that 'the State of Israel bears responsibility for the failure to prevent genocide, the commission of genocide and the failure to punish genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip'.²⁸⁴ Although the true number of deaths remains unknown, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 67,000 people have been killed in two years, which is circa 3 percent of the pre-war population.²⁸⁵

In April 2024, UN Special Rapporteurs expressed grave concern over scholasticide in Gaza, contending: 'It may be reasonable to ask if there is an intentional effort to comprehensively destroy the Palestinian education system.'²⁸⁶ This phenomenon describes the systematic destruction of an education system through the arrest, detention, or killing of teachers, students, and staff, alongside the devastation of schools and other educational infrastructure.²⁸⁷

Between 7 October 2023 and 25 February 2025, 403 of Gaza's 564 schools were directly hit. Because many schools operated double or triple shifts, the damage disrupted education for over 435,000 students and 16,000 teachers. Sixty-two percent of schools used as shelters were also struck, causing significant casualties.²⁸⁸

Given the extensive destruction of Gaza's educational infrastructure and the large number of students and teachers affected, there is a compelling rationale for Ireland to extend meaningful support to Palestinians, particularly students and educational institutions.

²⁸³ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, art 2.

²⁸⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel* UN Doc A/HRC/59/26 (6 May 2025) para 255 <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/g2506795-1.pdf>.

²⁸⁵ Mariam Ali, Alia Chughtai and Muhammet Okur, 'Two years of Israel's genocide in Gaza: By the numbers' *Al Jazeera* (7 October 2025) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/7/two-years-of-israels-genocide-in-gaza-by-the-numbers>.

²⁸⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Press Release, 'UN experts deeply concerned over "scholasticide" in Gaza' (18 April 2024) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza>.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸⁸ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel* UN Doc A/HRC/59/26 (6 May 2025) para 7 <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/g2506795-1.pdf>.



This support need not be considered only at the level of diplomacy. As statutory public bodies operating under Irish law, universities form part of the broader institutional expression of the State's values. Such an instance of university solidarity can be found in the University of Galway, where the Students' Union voted by referendum to join the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, with 65% of participating students supporting the motion.²⁸⁹

However, one major point of contention is the university's ongoing research collaboration with Technion – Israel Institute of Technology.²⁹⁰ Technion is deeply intertwined with the Israeli military and defence sectors, maintaining close links with major weapons manufacturers and defence research programs that support the Israeli Defence Forces and the broader military-industrial complex.²⁹¹

In response to University of Galway's decision not to terminate its partnership with Technion, the staff of the Irish Centre for Human Rights addressed an open letter to the University President, arguing that the university's legal justification for maintaining the contract fails to account for its own human rights obligations. The letter stated: 'As with any research agreement, there is provision for termination and removal of a partner. The *force majeure* arguments can hardly be clearer.'²⁹²

In June 2024, University of Galway released a Report on the Review of Links with Israeli and Palestinian Institutions and Industry, which recorded 11 European-funded research consortia in which University of Galway and an Israeli institution are partners and that University of Galway has received funding from one Israeli company.²⁹³

Considering these findings, the university's Working Group to review links with Israeli and Palestinian institutions and industry made a series of recommendations, including implementing a Human

²⁸⁹ Joanna Brophy, 'NUI Galway Students' Union Supports the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS)' (University of Galway Students' Union, 30 April 2014)

<https://su.universityofgalway.ie/news/nui-galway-students-union-supports-the-boycott-divestment-and-sanctions-movement-bds/>.

²⁹⁰ Pat McGrath, 'Protest urges University of Galway to cut all Israel ties' *RTE News* (21 November 2025)

<https://www.rte.ie/news/connacht/2025/1121/1545066-protest-university-galway/>.

²⁹¹ Academics for Palestine, 'Complicit Israeli Universities'.

<https://academicsforpalestine.dk/academic-boycott/complicit-israeli-universities/>; American Technion Society, 'The "Nagel Committee Report"' (*ats.org*, 10 March 2025) <https://ats.org/our-impact/the-nagel-committee-report/>.

²⁹² Irish Centre for Human Rights, 'Open letter to the President of the University of Galway regarding the university's research collaboration with Technion University' *Irish Centre for Human Rights Blog* (11 December 2025) <https://ichrgalway.org/2025/12/11/open-letter-to-the-president-of-the-university-of-galway-regarding-the-universitys-research-collaboration-with-technion-university/>.

²⁹³ University of Galway, *Report on the Review of Links with Israeli and Palestinian Institutions and Industry* (June 2024) 9 <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/sanctuary/Final-Report-of-the-Working-Group-to-Review-Links-with-Israeli-and-Palestinian-Institutions-and-Industry-July-2024.pdf>.



Rights Impact Assessment. It would ensure that future collaborations are evaluated not just on academic merit but on their broader ethical and legal consequences, aligning institutional practice with international law and human rights obligations.²⁹⁴

Questions we request that Ireland is asked:

- How will Ireland increase its support to Palestinian universities and their staff and students?
- What measures will Ireland put in place to ensure effective oversight of publicly funded universities so that their activities and international partnerships comply with international human rights standards?
- Will Ireland require its universities to undertake human rights due diligence, including impact assessments, when entering into research or institutional partnerships with foreign entities?

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 10.



Ireland and the Apartheid Convention

Apartheid is a grave violation of public international law. It is a crime against humanity under international criminal law and customary international law due to its seriousness as a violation of human rights. It involves the specific intent to maintain a system of cruel control of one or more racial groups by another.²⁹⁵ In 1974, the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (Apartheid Convention) opened for ratification,²⁹⁶ and to date it has 110 states parties.²⁹⁷ Surprisingly, Ireland has not ratified the Apartheid Convention.

Among the wide-ranging recommendations and questions from UN member states to Ireland in the third cycle of the Universal Periodical Review in 2021, there was no specific mention of the Apartheid Convention.²⁹⁸

Initially, the apartheid prohibition was rooted in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in Article 3.²⁹⁹ By 1998 it was explicitly included in the list of crimes against humanity contained in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court (Rome Statute).³⁰⁰ According to John Dugard, '[t]he Apartheid Convention was the ultimate step in the condemnation of apartheid as it not only declared that apartheid was unlawful because it violated the Charter of the United Nations, but in addition it declared apartheid to be criminal.'³⁰¹

Ireland had a significant role in generating anti-apartheid activism.³⁰² It became the first western

²⁹⁵ Amnesty International, 'Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity' (Amnesty International, 24 June 2022) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/> accessed 27 February 2026.

²⁹⁶ International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (adopted 30 November 1973, entered into force 18 July 1976) 1015 UNTS 243 (Apartheid Convention).

²⁹⁷ United Nations Treaty Collection, '*International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid*' (UNTS, 28 February 2026) https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-7&chapter=4&clang=_en accessed 28 February 2026.

²⁹⁸ UN OHCHR, 'UPR of Ireland (3rd Cycle – 39th Session), Matrice/Thematic list of recommendations' (ohchr.org) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ie-index> accessed 24 February 2026.

²⁹⁹ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (adopted 21 December 1965, entered into force 4 January 1969) 660 UNTS 195 (ICERD).

³⁰⁰ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (adopted 17 July 1998, entered into force 1 July 2002) 2187 UNTS 90 (Rome Statute).

³⁰¹ John Dugard, 'Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid' (United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law, August 2008) <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cspca/cspca.html> accessed 24 February 2026.

³⁰² President of Ireland, 'Speech on the Occasion of an Official Visit of HE Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa (8 October 2025)' <https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/speech-on-the-occasion-of-an-official-visit-of-h.e-cyрил-ramaphosa-president-of-south-africa> accessed 24 February 2026.



government to impose sanctions and boycott goods from South Africa which were produced under segregated conditions of apartheid.³⁰³ The profound impact of public protesting led the Government of Ireland to ban South African goods from being sold in Ireland until the end of the apartheid regime.³⁰⁴ Ireland promoted equality and dignity for southern African people. Therefore, why was Ireland not the first country to ratify the Apartheid Convention?

Importantly, the crime of apartheid is not exclusive to South Africa.³⁰⁵ In 2024, the International Court of Justice issued its own advisory opinion on Israel's systemically discriminatory legislation and practices against Palestinians, considering them to amount to apartheid and unlawful segregation between Palestinians and Israelis.³⁰⁶ Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, has declared that 'Israel is not a state of all its citizens... [but rather] the nation -state of the Jewish people and only them', which explicitly expresses Israeli supremacy over the land and resources.³⁰⁷ The Israeli government is committing apartheid when the government restricts the movement of the Palestinian residents,³⁰⁸ withdraws their property, and even segregates the Palestinians from their family according to different types of identity cards that classify Palestinians and cause unequal human rights.³⁰⁹ Lastly, since the creation of the Israeli state on the Palestinian lands, the state launched unlawful seizures to evict residents and possess the property and the land in an attempt to sustain Israeli supremacy and minimize the Palestinians' existence.³¹⁰

We request that Ireland is asked:

- Will it ratify the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid?

³⁰³ Irish Congress of Trade Unions, 'Remembering the Dunnes Stores Strike 35 years ago' (*ictu.ie* 5 November 2019) <https://www.ictu.ie/news/remembering-dunnes-stores-strike-35-years-ago> accessed 24 February 2026.

³⁰⁴ Rosita Boland, 'How 11 Striking Irish Workers Helped to Fight Apartheid' *The Irish Times* (6 December 2013) <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/africa/how-11-striking-irish-workers-helped-to-fight-apartheid-1.1618635> accessed 26 February 2026.

³⁰⁵ David Keane, 'Racial Segregation and Apartheid in the ICJ Palestine Advisory Opinion' *EJIL: Talk!* (31 July 2024) <https://www.ejiltalk.org/racial-segregation-and-apartheid-in-the-icj-palestine-advisory-opinion/> accessed 24 February 2026.

³⁰⁶ *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem* (Advisory Opinion) [2024] ICJ Rep 186.

³⁰⁷ Bill Chappell and Daniel Estrin, 'Netanyahu Says Israel is "Nation-State Of The Jewish People And Them Alone' *National Public Radio* (11 March 2019) <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/11/702264118/netanyahu-says-israel-is-nation-state-of-the-jewish-people-and-them-alone> accessed 27 February 2026.

³⁰⁸ United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Movement and Access update in the West Bank' (*ochaopt.org* 27 May 2025) <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/movement-and-access-update-west-bank-may-2025> accessed 24 February 2026.

³⁰⁹ Amnesty International, 'Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity' (Amnesty International, 24 June 2022) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/> accessed 27 February 2026.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*