

AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



FREEDOM OF HATE SPEECH

WHEN THE European Commission issued a statement in early May outlining the sanctions Ireland will face for failing to implement legislation criminalising hate speech, the response of some 'centre-right' politicians and supporters was predictable. Last September the then justice minister Helen McEntee had effectively kicked the can down the road on the implementation of the hate speech aspects of the on-again-off-again Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 in order to neutralise the issue in the run up to the general election.

The commission's statement said that Ireland faced being taken to the European Union's Court of Justice as "the Commission considers that Ireland still fails to transpose the provisions related to criminalising the public incitement to violence or hatred against a group or a member of such group based on certain characteristics, as well as the conducts of condoning, denial, and gross trivialisation of international crimes and the Holocaust".

In response an irate Michael McNamara, Independent MEP for Ireland South, demanded at the European Parliament that the threatened proceedings against Ireland be abandoned. He claimed that "people resent the fact that they're threatened with prosecution for expressing their views" and "are afraid to express their views, rightly or wrongly".

In the *Irish Independent* shock-jock columnist Ian O'Doherty asserted that the EU ultimatum threatened to lead Ireland down a dark path. In his usual melodramatic fashion on X O'Doherty even went as far as to state that the "EU is faltering and trying to become more dictatorial to maintain its control".

Off-Grid Ireland is a prominent Irish platform for right-wing content and has tens of thousands of subscribers and followers of its active online accounts on YouTube, X, Rum-

ble, Telegram and multiple other platforms.

It is run by Gavin Lowbridge and participants on livestreams broadcast by the platform have included British fascists Mark Collett, Joe Marsh and Stephen Thompson, members of Patriotic Alternative and right-wing figures from Ireland such as councillor Malachy Steenson, Hermann Kelly, Justin Barrett, Mike Connell, Philip Dwyer and Derek Blighe. For a number of years Patricia Regan helped Lowbridge manage the platform and, when she announced she was leaving her role on May 3, she said that, for her, Off-Grid Ireland was a "place of learning, growth and connection".

On Telegram Off-Grid Ireland has a channel for broadcasting public messages and the Off-Grid Ireland Chat group channel, which has over 5,300 members. The description in the chat group bio states: "All members views expressed are their own, we can't control it... We don't support any calls to violence in any way report to admin any violations... For Adults only. All rights reserved."

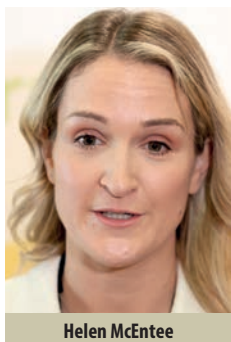
The Off-Grid Ireland chat group is a stream of extreme content, where there is regular use of racial slurs by members. Slurs

such as nigger, kike, faggot, yid, coon, knacker and abo are interspersed among members' comments. At the time of writing, the word nigger had been used 227 times by members of the Off-Grid Ireland chat group, the word faggot 208 times and the antisemitic term kike 179 times.

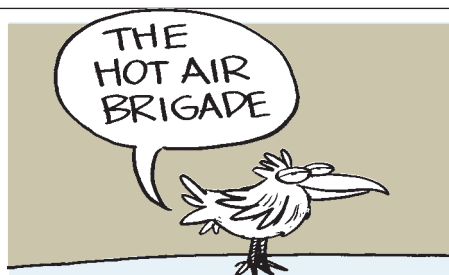
Despite asserting that the channel does not support threats of violence, comments such as "He needs to get a group of white boys together and go fuck them niggers up" and "Niggers got to go... It can be the easy way or the hard way... But they are going... Departure or buried..." are unmoderated. One Telegram member even felt free to post the following "I'd kill that black cunt!!!" and "I'm break [sic] every bone in that niggers body". Another posted: "Only good nigger is a dead nigger".

There are also threats of violence against Jews. A post by fawksstarr 2208 stated: "Jews for rope, and not the kind on a soap-KIKE". Another posted: "Our father's fathers should have killed every kike on the planet. Now we have to."

There are also hundreds of posts and dozens of videos shared that deny the holocaust, with phrases such as "fake holocaust tale", "big lie of the Jewish Holocaust" and other tropes.



Helen McEntee



I took that medal on behalf of all those people who don't get medals – the activists, the people who are getting killed now in Gaza.

Bono on his much-criticised acceptance of the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Joe Biden, RTÉ Radio 1



Bono

We've been going through so much hysterical climate catastrophism for the last few years that most people have just decided they've had enough and are now going to live their best life. **Ian O'Doherty, Irish Independent**

Vaulted ceilings evoke the architecture of Irish churches, with sweeping arches feeling reminiscent of medieval castles, and warm gold silk wallpaper representing the glow of an Irish hearth. **Trudy Feenane on the Rixo clothes store in Kildare Village, Irish Tatler**

It's 4 o'clock in the morning, you're on the bog and you get a bit of a sniff of fire. **Countrywide's Philip Boucher Hayes on the impact of fires on nesting curlews' habitat, RTÉ Radio 1**

Kelly materialised on the touchline in Croke Park, sporting an access-all-areas pink wristband, and a versatile sports coat and chinos, apt for a cocktail evening in the Hamptons or midtown Manhattan. **Denis Walsh on Declan Kelly, Irish Times**

RTÉ will also continue to work with other European broadcasters, sharing top quality masses and services from across the Continent. **RTÉ press release on the new commissioning process for Christian worship programmes, which may have been issued by the sports department**

So when I'm working on someone, I'm not working on them as Gary. I'm working as an antenna to the spirit world. I'm allowing the client's ancestors and the spirit world to come in and show me aspects of what needs to be healed in that person. **Shaman Gary Quigley, Irish Independent**

The room is as chic as the woman herself, with a sleek blonde bob and flawless make-up. **Janice Butler on Vogue Williams, RTÉ Guide**

Of course I am responsible. I am responsible for bringing the decision to the Cabinet. I am going to be responsible for a world-class facility. **Simon Harris speaking in the Dáil about the National Children's Hospital and its delays**

So naturally, when the morkeshing and commorcial hotshots in Montrose decided to film a slick new promo for RTÉ News, they hired in an outside company to make the advert. **Miriam Lord on the whiz kids in RTÉ's marketing department, Irish Times**

Please send suitable contributions to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie

