

+++ Pro-British Loyalists attack Romanian families and Irish locals in South Belfast +++ The police doesn't intervene +++ Locals takt to the streets in solidarity against racist attacks +++ Loyalist paramilitaries are supposedly in talks about decommissioning of their weapons +++

## **„We'll keep watch over their homes“**

### **Locals stand against racist attacks**

Racist attacks against Romanian families in Belfast made headlines also in the German media last week. More than 100 immigrants were forced to take shelter in a church near Queen's University last week after four days of racist attacks by loyalist thugs from the Village area of south Belfast. Houses inhabited by Romanian families were targeted. A gang smashed windows and threatened to stab pregnant women and children. Other families had been threatened by a man armed with a handgun.

These attacks provoke a feeling of „d  j   vu“. The attackers don't appear out of nowhere. They are part of the same loyalist gangs who were used and abused for decades by the British government in London and their pro-British Unionist proconsuls in Belfast against Irish communities in the North of Ireland. Incited to hatred against non protestant communities and against those, who didn't held the opinion that the North was the most British province under the crown, there was almost no decade without pogroms against Irish communities. Sectarianism, which can be described as anti-Irish racism, has always hit Ethnic minorities as well, Italian families, the Chinese community or recently the Romanian immigrants.

### **Police doesn't stop racist attacks**

The police didn't intervene to stop the attacks on the Romanian families. The PSNI had taken up to two hours to respond to calls. Some calls went unanswered.

# Hate crime investigated

**Catholic man also targeted in weekend attacks on Lisburn Rd homes**

BY ALANA FEARON  
afearon@belfastmediagroup.com

A young man whose South Belfast flat was attacked and sprayed with sectarian graffiti has said he is too afraid to return home.

Pearse Taggart was rehoused almost immediately after his Melrose Street home, just off the Lisburn Road, was attacked in the early hours of Saturday morning.

A visibly shocked Pearse said both he and his girlfriend



**Pearse Taggart musste am Wochenende aus seinem Haus in S  d Belfast fliehen.**

In March a Catholic father-of-four Kevin McDaid was beaten to death in Coleraine. His family said the PSNI stood by and did nothing during the attack. The PSNI neither intervened in 2005 in Aghohill, where they handed out fireprotection blankets to the victims of pipe bomb attacks. A loyalist gang attacked this small Irish community for weeks without the police doing anything about it.

In addition to the attacks on the Romanians an Irish family was targeted as well and

had to leave their home. „Kill all taigs“ was sprayed onto one of the walls of their house.

The attitude of the police and the good relations of policemen with loyalist gangs is one of the huge problems of the process of conflict resolution. The recent news that loyalists are in talks about decommissioning and may have started this process would be good news, but with the attacks going on it's difficult to believe in the seriousness.

## Locals show their solidarity with the Romanian families

A very positive signal is coming from locals of the area. They took the street to show solidarity with the Romanian families and to stand against further racist attacks. At their first local rally on June 15 a hundred local people attended. They were attacked by loyalists. Youths hurled bottles and made Nazi salutes at those taking part in the anti-racism rally. While the bigots scrawled slogans supporting the neo-nazi group Combat 18 and the fascist British National Party (BNP), links to either group appear superficial.

# Locals vow to protect ethnic minority

**We'll keep watch over their homes, swear anti-racist protestors**

BY SCOTT JAMISON  
s.jamison@belfastmailgroup.com

South Belfast residents have said they will stand guard to protect the homes of ethnic minorities following several racist attacks on properties in the area this week.

Over 100 people took to the Lisburn Road on Monday June 15 to protest against the attacks, which have seen a sustained barrage against three homes, in Belgravia Avenue, Wellesley Avenue and Wellington Park.

The attacks have already seen one Romanian family move out of the area.

take it in shifts to protect the houses, as they are now obvious targets, and we will stay here until there is no more threat.

"This has been a horrible and sustained attack on a vulnerable group of people who have been singled out to try and force them out of the area. We are asking local people to mobilise if another attack happens and show what the community really thinks. We are not racist and oppose these attacks."

Paddy said there would be further action if the attacks did not stop.

"We have spoken to community activists and trade unionists and will call a major public meeting to discuss what to do. Getting everyone together is the best way of defending the area."

A small group of youths attacked the protestors with bottles and chanted Combat-18 slogans, however they were



Anwohner aus Süd Belfast zeigen Solidarität

Paddy Meehan, a neighbor of the threatened Romanian families started right after the first attack on June 12 to raise awareness within the neighborhood and get people on the street against the racist attacks.

### **„Long standing problem“**

Locals criticize that the police did nothing to prevent or to stop the attacks. Quite to the contrary, the police advised the Romanian people to move out of the area. The attackers later exulted in their success, with some travelling to west Belfast where they desecrated republican graves. Racist and sectarian slogans, along with Combat 18 graffiti was daubed on the Republican Plot in Milltown cemetery. A considerable amount of damage was done to the graves.



Sinn Fein Assembly member for West Belfast, Paul Maskey, condemned the unionist response to the latest incidents:

*"We do not see any flow of information from within that community to the PSNI either on the attack on the Republican graves or indeed more worryingly on the disgraceful attempts to drive the Romanian community from the city. Racist attacks coming from within the unionist community in Belfast are not new and did not just start this week with attacks on the Romanians. This has been a long standing problem and one which clearly has not yet been properly addressed either by political representatives of that community or indeed by the PSNI. Otherwise these attacks would have stopped years ago."*

On Sunday 500 people took to the street in a second rally of solidarity in which also the Deputy First Minister Martin Mc Guinness (Sinn Fein) took part.

(See also reports from Irish Republican News and South Belfast News from Juni 12-20, 2009. Fotos 1 and 2 from South Belfast News , June 20, 2009, Foto 3 shows a part of the memorial of the Easter Rising, Belfast Telegraph, June 19, 2009.)