

Information



POLICE AUTHORITY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

RIVER HOUSE, HIGH STREET, BELFAST BT1 2DR
BELFAST 30111

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

At the time of publication of the Bennett Report into the procedures for interrogation of persons suspected of scheduled offences, there was considerable public concern over allegations of ill-treatment of suspects by the RUC.

The Police Authority in expressing their own concern indicated that they would be conducting a series of meetings with relevant bodies including political parties about the contents of the Report. These meetings have taken place and have included consultations with the doctors whom the Authority employ to examine persons in police custody at police stations or police offices. The doctors have recently been asked to let the Authority have copies of all reports on medical examinations carried out since May 1978 where the examination resulted in significant findings tending to support allegations by the prisoner of ill-treatment.

As a result the Authority have received from their doctors a

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2.

total of 8 cases covering this period of over 13 months, in regard to persons who had been interrogated by the RUC because they were suspected of scheduled offences involving terrorist activity; in each case the prisoner alleged ill-treatment and the medical evidence tended to support the allegations.

Standard procedures providing for investigation by the Chief Constable and for subsequent consideration by the Director of Public Prosecutions had already been initiated in each of these 8 cases. In four (4) of the cases the alleged ill-treatment was claimed to have happened at Castlereagh police office.

The aim of the Authority in this area of activity is to see that safeguards operate to eliminate as far as possible cause for justified complaint by even one prisoner. However these statistics, based as they are on a specific survey of the reports submitted in individual cases by doctors during this period, help to place in perspective the generalised allegations so freely made from time to time against the RUC. The Authority therefore, in exercise of their statutory responsibilities and as a public watchdog for all the people in Northern Ireland, publish these statistics for the record. Further, the Authority consider that the facts indicate that

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3.

complaints against the RUC which may have substance have been relatively very few indeed in regard to persons interrogated as terrorist suspects and certainly do not warrant criticism on a scale to which the police have been subjected in recent times on this issue.

The doctors also reported on other cases of possible ill-treatment where the persons were suspected not of involvement in terrorism but of ordinary criminal offences including burglary etc and these are likewise being investigated by the Chief Constable. The Authority are concerned about any complaint against the RUC that tends to be supported by medical evidence and their Complaints Committee will follow up all these type cases with equal vigour.

The Authority have now completed their consultations in regard to the contents of the Bennett Report and they have made a formal submission of their views to the Secretary of State. In particular the Authority have supported the recommendations made in the Report for further safeguards to be introduced into the interrogation process.

22 JUNE 1979