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At least one person a week is victim of a 'punishment attack'

(Allison Morris, [Irish News](#))

Five people are being either shot or assaulted every month as paramilitary-style attacks continue. Despite assaults being on the decline in recent years, latest figures show that both republican and loyalist groups are still dishing out vigilante-style violence within their own communities.

Statistics obtained by *The Irish News* show that in the past 12 months, a total of 26 people have been shot in so-called 'punishment' attacks, and 41 people assaulted.

The majority of attacks are still being carried out by loyalist groups, who were responsible for shooting 14 people. Loyalist paramilitaries have also been responsible for 29 beatings.

However, the most serious attacks in the last year were carried out by dissident republican factions.

Dissident republicans carried out 12 shootings and were responsible for a similar number of assaults.

Among those injured was west Belfast teenager Conor Weldon, who had to have his right leg amputated below the knee after being blasted with a shotgun in an attack later admitted by the Continuity IRA.

The Beechmount teenager was shot at close range as he walked along the Falls Road in September last year.

Surgeons could not save his leg as it contained more than 300 shotgun pellets.

In October last year the Continuity IRA admitted responsibility for three further paramilitary-style shootings in north Belfast.

As a result of death threats issued by the group several young men also fled their homes in north and west Belfast.

West Belfast Community Restorative Justice (CRJ) worker Jim Auld condemned the attacks, saying that "in today's

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society there is no place for violent vigilantism".

"We're aware of a number of punishment attacks that have been carried out in this past few months and we're disappointed," he said.

"CRJ offer a viable alternative to that type of behaviour which needs to be condemned to the past.

"Every right-minded thinking person realises you can't beat out the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour.

"It just doesn't work – if beating someone or shooting someone did work we wouldn't have any anti-social problems today."

April 8, 2007

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