

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1987 No. 463

The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987

PART III

STIRRING UP HATRED OR AROUSING FEAR

Acts intended or likely to stir up hatred or arouse fear

Meaning of “fear” and “hatred” [^{F1} etc.]

8.—^{F2}(1) In this Part—

“fear” means fear of a group of persons^{F3}. . . defined by reference to religious belief,^{F4} sexual orientation, disability] colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins;

“hatred” means hatred against a group of persons^{F3}. . . defined by reference to religious belief,^{F4} sexual orientation, disability] colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins.

^{F5}(2) For the purposes of this Part, any discussion or criticism of marriage which concerns the sex of the parties to marriage is not to be taken of itself to be—

- (a) threatening, abusive or insulting, or
- (b) intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear.]

F1 Word in art. 8 heading inserted (13.1.2020) by [The Marriage \(Same-sex Couples\) and Civil Partnership \(Opposite-sex Couples\) \(Northern Ireland\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/1514\)](#), regs. 1(2), **142(c)** (with regs. 6-9)

F2 Art. 8(1): art.8 renumbered as art. 8(1) (13.1.2020) by [The Marriage \(Same-sex Couples\) and Civil Partnership \(Opposite-sex Couples\) \(Northern Ireland\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/1514\)](#), regs. 1(2), **142(a)** (with regs. 6-9)

F3 2001 c. 24

F4 2004 NI 15

F5 Art. 8(2) inserted (13.1.2020) by [The Marriage \(Same-sex Couples\) and Civil Partnership \(Opposite-sex Couples\) \(Northern Ireland\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/1514\)](#), regs. 1(2), **142(b)** (with regs. 6-9)

Use of words or behaviour or display of written material

9.—(1) A person who uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or displays any written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting, is guilty of an offence if—

- (a) he intends thereby to stir up hatred or arouse fear; or
- (b) having regard to all the circumstances hatred is likely to be stirred up or fear is likely to be aroused thereby.

Changes to legislation: The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, Cross Heading: Acts intended or likely to stir up hatred or arouse fear is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 22 November 2023. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(2) An offence under this Article may be committed in a public or a private place, except that no offence is committed where the words or behaviour are used, or the written material is displayed, by a person inside a dwelling and are not heard or seen except by other persons in that or another dwelling.

(3) In proceedings for an offence under this Article it is a defence for the accused to prove that he was inside a dwelling and had no reason to believe that the words or behaviour used, or the written material displayed, would be heard or seen by a person outside that or any other dwelling.

(4) A person who is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear is not guilty of an offence under this Article if he did not intend his words or behaviour, or the written material, to be, and was not aware that it might be, threatening, abusive or insulting.

(5) This Article does not apply to words or behaviour used, or written material displayed, solely for the purpose of being included in a programme^{F6} included in a programme service.]

F6 1990 c. 42

Publishing or distributing written material

10.—(1) A person who publishes or distributes written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting is guilty of an offence if—

- (a) he intends thereby to stir up hatred or arouse fear; or
- (b) having regard to all the circumstances hatred is likely to be stirred up or fear is likely to be aroused thereby.

(2) In proceedings for an offence under this Article it is a defence for an accused who is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear to prove that he was not aware of the content of the material and did not suspect, and had no reason to suspect, that it was threatening, abusive or insulting.

(3) References in this part to the publication or distribution of written material are to its publication or distribution to the public or a section of the public.

Distributing, showing or playing a recording

11.—(1) A person who distributes, or shows or plays, a recording of visual images or sounds which are threatening, abusive or insulting is guilty of an offence if—

- (a) he intends thereby to stir up hatred or arouse fear; or
- (b) having regard to all the circumstances hatred is likely to be stirred up or fear is likely to be aroused thereby.

(2) In this part “recording” means any record from which visual images or sounds may, by any means, be reproduced; and references to the distribution, showing or playing of a recording are to its distribution, showing or playing to the public or a section of the public.

(3) In proceedings for an offence under this Article it is a defence for an accused who is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear to prove that he was not aware of the content of the recording and did not suspect, and had no reason to suspect, that it was threatening, abusive or insulting.

(4) This Article does not apply to the showing or playing of a recording solely for the purpose of enabling the recording to be^{F7} included in a programme service].

F7 1990 c. 42

Broadcasting or including programme in cable programme service

12.—(1) If a programme involving threatening, abusive or insulting visual images or sounds is^{F8} included in a programme service], each of the persons mentioned in paragraph (2) is guilty of an offence if—

- (a) he intends thereby to stir up hatred or arouse fear; or
- (b) having regard to all the circumstances hatred is likely to be stirred up or fear is likely to be aroused thereby.

(2) The persons are—

- (a) the person providing the^{F9} . . . programme service;
- (b) any person by whom the programme is produced or directed; and
- (c) any person by whom offending words or behaviour are used.

(3) If the person providing the service, or a person by whom the programme was produced or directed, is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear, it is a defence for him to prove that—

- (a) he did not know and had no reason to suspect that the programme would involve the offending material; and
- (b) having regard to the circumstances in which the programme was^{F8} included in a programme service], it was not reasonably practicable for him to secure the removal of the material.

(4) It is a defence for a person by whom the programme was produced or directed who is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear to prove that he did not know and had no reason to suspect—

- (a) that the programme would be^{F8} included in a programme service]; or
- (b) that the circumstances in which the programme would be^{F9} . . . so included would be such that hatred would be likely to be stirred up or fear would be likely to be aroused.

(5) It is a defence for a person by whom offending words or behaviour were used and who is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear to prove that he did not know and had no reason to suspect—

- (a) that a programme involving the use of the offending material would be^{F8} included in a programme service]; or
- (b) that the circumstances in which a programme involving the use of the offending material would be^{F9} . . . so included, or in which a programme^{F9} . . . so included would involve the use of the offending material, would be such that hatred would be likely to be stirred up or fear would be likely to be aroused.

(6) A person who is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear is not guilty of an offence under this Article if he did not know, and had no reason to suspect, that the offending material was threatening, abusive or insulting.

Paras. (7), (8) rep. by 1990 c. 42

F8 1990 c. 42

F9 1990 c. 42

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Possession of matter intended or likely to stir up hatred or arouse fear

13.—(1) A person who has in his possession written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting, or a recording of visual images or sounds which are threatening, abusive or insulting, with a view to—

- (a) in the case of written material, its being displayed, published, distributed,^[F10] or included in a programme service], whether by himself or another; or
- (b) in the case of a recording, its being distributed, shown, played,^[F10] or included in a programme service], whether by himself or another,

is guilty of an offence if he intends hatred to be stirred up or fear to be aroused thereby or, having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up or fear is likely to be aroused thereby.

(2) For this purpose regard shall be had to such display, publication, distribution, showing, playing,^[F10] or inclusion in a programme service] as he has, or it may reasonably be inferred that he has, in view.

(3) In proceedings for an offence under this Article it is a defence for an accused who is not shown to have intended to stir up hatred or arouse fear to prove that he was not aware of the content of the written material or recording and did not suspect, and had no reason to suspect, that it was threatening, abusive or insulting.

Para. (4) rep. 1990 c. 42

F10 1990 c. 42

Changes to legislation:

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- Instrument amended by [1998 c. 2 s.18\(1\)Sch.3 para.3](#)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Order associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Order (including any effects on those provisions):

- art.2(3)(b) amended by [1996 c. 26 s. 2\(3\)\(4\)](#)
- art.2(3)(b) amended by [1996 c. 26 s. 2\(3\)\(4\)](#)
- arts.5(2)66A7(1) revoked by [1998 c. 2 s.18\(2\)Sch.4](#)