

E/CN.4/1998/39/Add.4  
page 7

16. An example of this type of harassment and intimidation of solicitors is seen in a case the Special Rapporteur transmitted to the Government in a letter dated 1 August 1997. According to the source, it was alleged that one solicitor had been the victim of numerous death threats owing to the representation of a client, who had been charged with the murder of two RUC officers. Further, in relation to the representation of a residents group who oppose marching by the Orange Order through their nationalist housing estate, it was alleged that on 6 July 1997 the solicitor was verbally and physically abused while attempting to communicate with an RUC officer concerning the RUC efforts to seal off the area. The source further alleged that an RUC officer spat on the face of the solicitor who was accused of being a "Fenian" sympathizer. The solicitor was also allegedly struck on the back of the head with a police riot shield while intervening on behalf of a boy who was allegedly being ill-treated by an RUC officer.

17. In a response dated 6 October 1997, the Government informed the Special Rapporteur, *inter alia*, of the following:

I can confirm that the Royal Ulster Constabulary has received four complaints from the solicitor and the client. The investigation of these is being supervised by the Independent Commission for Police Complaints. However, to date, the solicitor has not made himself available for interview to discuss the complaints. Police conduct is guided by the RUC's Professional Policing Ethics and Disciplinary Regulations: members who engage in any activity which contravenes either face the full rigours of the disciplinary regulations ...

18. While in Northern Ireland the Special Rapporteur was provided with another example of physical abuse concerning a solicitor. On 18 December 1996, the solicitor was attending the Grosvenor Road RUC Station in Belfast on behalf of a client. The RUC requested permission to take a mouth swab from the client for the purposes of DNA testing. The solicitor advised the client that he could decline to give a sample, but that if he did so the RUC were entitled to use reasonable force to do so. He did so decline, and the solicitor then advised him not to resist if the RUC insisted on taking a sample. However, he declined to take that advice and proceeded to resist, whereupon the police officer concerned summoned assistance from his colleagues. A number of officers entered the Charge Room, including the Custody Sergeant, Sergeant [REDACTED], who is responsible for the welfare of detainees. He ordered the solicitor to leave the room. The solicitor questioned his authority to require him to leave and his reasons for doing so. He replied that it was for the safety of the solicitor. The latter advised him that he was prepared to take responsibility for his own safety, whereupon Sergeant [REDACTED] grabbed him by the arm and forcibly ejected him from the room. The solicitor has commenced legal proceedings against the officer concerned and the Chief Constable of the RUC for assault, battery and trespass to person and is seeking exemplary damages.

19. Another serious incident related to the Special Rapporteur concerns a solicitor from Belfast. According to his client, the solicitor was described as a "provie bastard" by RUC officers interrogating him on 14 October 1997 at the Gough Barracks in Armagh. What makes this case unique and disturbing to