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## **Racism: the evil that must be eradicated from Northern Ireland's society**

### **Statement from the Chief Commissioner ahead of NI Assembly Recall**

Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said: "There can be no excuse for the blatant racism and criminal acts on our streets. Those involved are damaging their own communities.

We must let the police and criminal justice agencies deal with those responsible robustly, quickly and effectively. Our statutory agencies must do all in their power to support those affected to build trust and confidence, to encourage them to stay, to rebuild their livelihoods and continue making a positive contribution to Northern Ireland.

Our [research](#) last year showed that our ethnic minority communities feel life here is more difficult following Brexit and that they are not a priority for government.

As a society we have an obligation to protect those who have come to seek refuge, work and contribute to our society. They should be able to live their lives without fear of attack.

We recognise the correlation between the increasing inequalities across our community and cuts in public spending, but this is no justification for the racism and the malicious behaviours we have witnessed. The ongoing public narrative around race, particularly online, is making these attitudes appear socially acceptable, this is not tolerable.

To eradicate racism, we need a concerted response across society, with clear direction, commitment and action. We will only succeed in tackling racism and achieve racial equality in Northern Ireland if we have high level commitment and leadership from government.

We welcome the Assembly recall, but it is not good enough just to talk about it as has been done before. The NI Executive must prioritise achieving racial equality and combatting racism in their Programme for Government.

We need a new Racial Equality Strategy with concrete, outcome focused actions that are adequately resourced. The new strategy must target the elimination of racial inequalities but must also tackle prejudicial attitudes, promote respect for difference and foster community cohesion.

Furthermore, we must see the introduction of effective hate crime legislation, the implementation of an effective Refugee Integration Strategy, ethnic equality monitoring and race law reform.

Let us work together to embrace diversity and enrich all our lives, we all have a role to play. Racism must not be allowed to be a daily occurrence for our ethnic minority communities”, concluded Ms McGahey.