

**Re: Article in the Sunday Independent, 3rd August 2008**

06/08/2008

**6th August 2008**

*Editor  
Sunday Independent  
Independent House  
27 – 32 Talbot Street  
Dublin 1  
Ireland*

Our Ref: WS/315/Sep/08

Dear Sir

The Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors wishes to complain in the strongest possible manner at the contents of an article in the Sunday Independent on Sunday, August 3rd, 2008, entitled 'Garda's gay club visit shows new face of the force'.

We have received complaints from our members about the article and we believe it is not only offensive to members of the garda organisation who are gay, but also to the entire gay community. This article was clearly intended to stir up anti-gay feelings in general, within the Garda Síochána and in particular amongst Garda Headquarters personnel and I have expanded on this point later in this letter.

The Association also condemns the article in the light of the garda organisation's good record in developing policies to prevent harassment and bullying. The article is a serious setback to the organisation where

a great deal has been achieved over recent years in developing policies to ensure that minorities and individuals are not bullied or harassed because of race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, membership of the travelling community or sexual orientation.

In the opinion of the association the article is in breach of the Code of Practice for Newspapers and Periodicals which forms the basis for adjudications by the Press Ombudsman and Press Council of Ireland.

The particular breaches are:

#### Breach of Principle 3.1 – Fairness and Honesty

It is not fair or honest to publish an article that refers to the private life of any citizen, to how they were dressed or where they were in their own time when there is no legitimate public interest served by the publication of such details. It is not fair or honest in the course of such an article to introduce such derogatory terms as 'Garda Hindquarters' or to refer to a "pink circle' in Phoenix Park depot".

#### Breach of Principle 5.1 – The Right to Privacy

It is a breach of the privacy of the person involved, who is obviously known to at least some of his colleagues, to publish details of how they were dressed or where they were during their own time. The article has been written in a most intrusive and offensive manner about a

member's behaviour that is totally unrelated to their professional role. Describing a Garda member as 'coming out of one of the country's best known gay bars dressed in what were described as 'tight black leather pants' is both unnecessary and un-newsworthy. We cannot accept that what gardaí legitimately do while off duty is fair game for any press reporter. A Garda member's family status, marital status, sexual orientation and religious behaviour are private. They are not matters of public interest. In an organisation like An Garda Síochána it is not always necessary to name names. We believe that the article will have inevitably resulted in a great deal of speculation as to who is the officer concerned with the resultant loss of privacy.

#### Breach of Principle 5.2 – Respect for Privacy

There has been a total lack of respect for the privacy and the sensibilities of this individual member and for the privacy and sensibilities of his gay colleagues. The damage is done to a small number of gay members in difficult personal domestic circumstances. It will have negative emotional and psychological consequences for these people who have done nothing wrong. We feel that members of the gay community will have been both upset and distressed by the publication of this article.

The association is particularly concerned by the intrusion into the lives of gay and lesbian members of the Garda Síochána and the homophobic insinuations in the article about 'Garda Hindquarters' and a 'pink circle' in the Phoenix Park Depot.

AGSI calls on you to publish a formal apology and retraction of the article.

Sincerely

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**Joe Dirwan**

*General Secretary*