News

Belfast riots June 2026

A fire burns in bins as anti-immigrant protesters clash with police at Antrim road, following a knife attack on June 8, which left a man seriously injured and prompted police to declare a critical incident, in Belfast, Northern Ireland, June 10, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Isabel Infantes)

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Bishop Alan McGuckian of Down and Connor denounced rioters who have targeted migrants following a second night of violent protests in Belfast and parts of Northern Ireland.

"Shame on all those who have sought to mobilize, agitate, weaponize and politicize the fear and concerns of others over the last few days," McGuckian said in a statement sent to OSV News June 11.

"All of us have a responsibility to de-escalate societal tension rather than stoke the flames of racism," wrote the bishop who also serves as chair of the Council for Migrants, Refugees and Justice and Peace of the Irish bishops' conference.

According to BBC News, the violent riots broke out June 9 following the arrest of Hadi Alodid, a 30-year-old Sudanese refugee who was charged with attempted murder after he attacked a man, Stephen Ogilvie, with a kitchen knife. Ogilvie is currently in an induced coma and in stable condition, his family said.

The attack sparked outrage, prompting many to take to the streets in violent protest and burn vehicles throughout Belfast. Several news outlets reported that masked men took to the streets, chanting "foreigners out" and setting fire to the homes of migrant residents. Witnesses reported that the majority of those attacked were targeted by rioters for being the same skin color as Alodid.

Michelle O’Neill, the first minister of Northern Ireland, said there was "no excuse and no justification for these attacks tonight."

"Groups of masked men burning families out of their homes is nothing less than disgusting cowardice," O'Neill said, according to Reuters.

In a statement published June 10 by Northern Ireland Police, Olgivie's family said they felt "disgusted by the scenes" of violent rioting.

"We want to make it absolutely clear that to do this in response is not supported by our family, and peaceful protest is only ever the way forward," the statement read. "We have many migrants who make a deeply valuable contribution to our country, including from within our healthcare system and hospitality sector, and we depend on them to make our country work."

The family said it did not want Olgivie's attack "to be used to divide people or fuel hostility."

"Do not do this in the name of our loved one as we do not share the same values," the family said.

McGuckian said he was praying for Ogilvie's recovery, and paid tribute to his family's "appeal for calm as they support Stephen." Noting the devastating scenes of rioting in Belfast, the bishop lamented the feelings of people who "are now living in terror, for themselves and for their children."

While noting that society has a responsibility to address "the real and tangible community concerns regarding safety and accountability," the riots and continued attacks against migrants "will not resolve any underlying issues, and violence will

have to give way to dialogue and engagement."

"As a society, we in Northern Ireland have journeyed too far on the road to reconciliation and paid too high a price in a legacy of suffering to risk retreating into conflict and racial oppression," he wrote.

The civil unrest in Northern Ireland was among several issues addressed June 10 by Irish bishops gathered at St. Patrick’s College in Maynooth for their annual summer general assembly. "Bishops prayed for peace and that the sacred dignity of each human person would be upheld by all," a statement from the Irish bishops' conference read.

In their statement, the bishops of Ireland said the attacks against the homes and businesses of migrants were "all the more disconcerting."

"The true measure of a just society is one which effectively welcomes newcomers, combats racism and rejects divisive political rhetoric," the statement said.

Although the second night of riots was less intense, water cannons and armored vehicles were deployed against several dozen rioters who were throwing bricks, Molotov cocktails and setting off fireworks. According to The Irish Independent, 12 police officers were injured and 16 rioters were arrested June 10.

The Irish bishops concluded their statement, calling "for support for the police and for community leaders throughout the summer months."

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