Irish police — "Give me your name and address or I'll rape you"

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Give me your name and address or I'll rape you" — the words of a Garda Sgt as he discussed with at least two other Gardai how they were going to interrogate one of two female Shell to Sea campaigners they had arrested and who were being brought to Belmullet Garda station. Just second earlier while they were discussing how to interrogate the women one Garda suggested they threaten her with deportation. The Sgt responds with the addition of the rape threat which he repeats before another so far unidentified Garda chimes in with "*hold it there, give me your name and address there, I'll rape you"* prompting the Sgt to repeat it one last time as *"or I'll definitely rape you."*

The Garda press office have tried to spin this horrific revelation by press releasing that a *"Garda Superintendent from outside the Mayo area was appointed this afternoon to carry out an examination of the alleged derogatory remarks."* Shamefully but unsurprizingly RTE initially simply reprinted and broadcast on the Nine o'Clock News this press release without question, despite the fact that audio, video and a transcript were all sent to the station 10 hours beforehand, around 11pm on Monday.

This morning despite having access to the audio for 20 hours Morning Ireland has not yet chosen not to play it and worse still to spin the alleged remarks as simply being *"of sexual and disturbing nature*". Both the original Garda remarks, the attempt by the press office to spin it and the compliance of the state broadcaster with this strategy demonstrate how completely Shell have managed to bend all sections of the state to its will. If you have not yet listened to the audio you should do so now to understand what was actually said — with the audio in circulation online we expect RTE will be forced to broadcast it.

Dublin Shell to Sea spokesperson Caoimhe Kerrins has said of the recording that *"This is shocking and extremely serious. It is very frightening for those of us involved in the campaign. Gardai are the people that women are supposed to trust when they need to report a rape. Gardai are supposed to be responsible for bringing rapists to justice."*

Two of the Garda on the tape have been in the area since the start of the struggle against Shell's experimental gas pipeline and so are "known to campaigners" for their roles in numerous other incidents. They have have identified by the Rossport Solidarity Camp which so far has chosen

not to make their identities public. We are also aware of who they are but will reluctantly follow the lead of those directly involved in not publishing them.

It is telling that despite the fact that at least one other Garda joins in the interrogation discussion the Garda press release only refers to an investigation of two officers, presumably the ones named in the transcripts that Shell to Sea had provided to the media. Are we to believe that the Garda are incapable of working out who that third unnamed officer is? And what are we to take of a media that supplied the transcripts to the Garda and then not only failed to run with the actual story of Garda discussion using the threat of rape as an interrogation technique against a women in their custody but in the knowledge of what that story was ran instead with the spin!

Rossport Solidarity Camp have published a transcript of key sections of the recording on Indymedia.ie as below

TRANSCRIPTS OF KEY SEGMENTS:

[These transcripts, as well as the recording, were provided to the mainstream media by the Rossport Solidarity Camp. The Gardaí in question were named in the original transcripts. The Irish Times changed the name of the Sergeant to "Garda A" and changed the name of the other Garda to "Garda B". Rossport Solidarity Camp also decided to remove the names of the Gardaí before publishing here, but changed the Sergeant's name to "Sergeant" and the other named Garda to "Garda A", and incorporated this into the video file on Vimeo. Hence there seems to be an inconsistency between the Irish Times transcripts and the Indymedia transcripts, but there is not. "Garda B" in the Irish Times is "Garda A" on Indymedia and Vimeo.]

Sergeant: "Who is them two lassies, do you know the two of them?

Garda A: "I don't know the second one, the first one is with blonde hair."

Unidentified Garda: "She was up on the tractor earlier on."

Sergeant: "It'd do no harm to get the second one's name again?

Garda A: "She's some Yank. I don't know who the fuck she is."

Unidentified Garda: " Is she a Yank?

Garda A: "It sounds like it, it sounds like it, the accent anyway

Unidentified Garda: "Sounds like a Yank or Canadian."

Garda A: "Well whoever, we'll get Immigration fucking on her."

Sergeant: "She refused to give her name and address and told she would be arrested."

Garda A: "……and deported"

Sergeant: "And raped."

Garda A: "I wouldn't go that far yet….. She was living down at that crusty camp, fuck sake, you never know what you might get."

Sergeant: "Give me your name and address or I'll rape you."

Unidentified Garda: "Hold it there, give me your name and address there, I'll rape you."

Sergeant: "Or I'll definitely rape you."

Unidentified Garda: "Will you be me friend on Facebook?"

[Conversation continues about Facebook in Garda station]

Excerpt from video camera recording in which Gardaí discuss safety and techniques for arrest at protests.

Sergeant: [on phone to a colleague]: "I know we don't want to be arresting them but by the same token, we were left with no option. We have an issue there as well with the lads in the protest removal team there, of actual climbing the tractors. So what we're going to do is we're going to get safety ropes and ladders and we're going to leave them in the van in case we have to go up on the cab of the tractor again. So we're looking after that now at the moment."

Sergeant: ends call.

Garda A: "You see at least you're a sergeant, like."

Sergeant: " like some of auld timers who were here in the area in the first and second campaign. I'll tell you one thing, the decisions that were made policing at that time."

Garda A: I'll still go back to what says there … If someone gets hurt we're going to be on our own in the blocks."

Sergeant: "… I don't think we're going to be on our own. If we have exercised due diligence and we have used common sense and used whatever was available to us to remove them. At the end of the day, we have a certain duty of care to them. We ask them to get down, if they don't get down, we tell them we are taking them down forcefully. We take them down forcefully.

"We use whatever means at our disposal, which includes ladders and ropes or whatever to get them down safely. If one of them slips, so fuckin. What can we do?"

Garda A: "Ladders and ropes. All I'm saying is, the point is

'Garda, are you a member of the protest removal team?'

'I am.'

'Have you received training with working at heights?'

'Yes, I have.'

…'How did you train to bring someone down?'

'In a harness with ropes.'"

"We didn't have any of them options today there … That's all I'm saying. And is dead right; if we're in the box:

'Have you received training on how to take a protester down from heights?'

'Yes'."

"And if we did it with ropes and harnesses … then why did you let my client fall? Did you not go get your ropes and harness to take her down. That's all."

Sergeant: "…To get them down safely we'd have to erect a scaffold tower beside them and abseil them down. And and, the, the, taking the common-sense approach, and a common-sense view, it would be impractical to erect a scaffolding tower to get them down off it. And we use whatever safe means at our disposal, as we considered safe protest removal team to take them down, ie, ropes and ladders."

Unidentified Garda: "What was the obstruction?"

Garda A: "There was no obstruction …"

Sergeant: "They were obstructing the road."

Garda A: "There was no obstruction … The tractors all other vehicles were able to get past."

Sergeant: "They were obstructing the road. Excuse me. If a car stops there, in the middle of that fucking road, and it's stopped there, it's obstructing the road. It doesn't have to be blocking it. If it's parked there it's obstructing it."

Unidentified Garda: "Well if nothing else they were obstructing the vehicle."

Garda A: "That's the only vehicle obstructed."

Unidentified Garda: "… free passage."

Sergeant: "The vehicle was obstructing the road. Just because other vehicles could pass didn't mean the road wasn't being obstructed."

Sergeant seems to get out of the car …

Garda A: "We all said this, it was a safety issue."

Unidentified Garda: "It was the best option . It was the best option at that time, there's no doubt about it."

Garda A: "We all said it because of a safety issue. There was three up, there was a wind blowing. And like did you fucking feel safe, 100 per cent safe going up there taking down two people."

Unidentified Garda: "No".

Garda A: "…I don't know what you thought?"

Unidentified garda: "All I know is that if something happens, who's going to stand fucking behind me."

Garda A: "And do you honestly think that is going to turn around and say "oh look it". We got trained a certain way.

'Garda did you fucking, take a protester down the way you were trained'.

'No I didn't.'

'Well then Guard.'

"And the job will say were you fucking trained a certain way. The job will fucking ditch you."

Dublin Shell to Sea described how the Garda came to record themselves and hand over this recording to the campaign as follows

Last Thursday, 31st March 2011, several Gardai, including a Sergeant, accidentally recorded their own conversation while travelling in a squad car in north Mayo. They had just arrested two female protesters at a Shell compound at Aughoose, had seized their camera and had let the camera continue recording in the car. The women were travelling in two other Garda cars in the same convoy.

After the women were released without charge, and the camera returned to them, the women discovered the recording of the Garda conversation. This included the Gardaí talking about threatening to rape one of the women in their custody. They also talk about whether they should bother adhering to safety procedures for removing protesters from heights: the Sergeant advocates ignoring the rules learned in Garda training. "

One of the two women described how on playing back the tape *"It was terrifying to hear Gardaí talk in this way about rape. How can women living in the area feel safe when such a culture of brutal intimidation and violence exists here?"*

The communities around the pipeline route have been under siege for years by an occupying force of Gardai and private security that at times of tension has reached 500 or more personnel. Garda have made threats to rape women involved in the campaign in the past during this occupation. Residents have complained of private security from IRMS filming their children on the beach or apparently filming them inside their houses. Several residents and many campaigners have suffered injuries, some of them serious, as the result of Garda violence. The Garda have arrested people at the moment Shell needed them arrested and the courts have tried people on the days Shell needed them out of the way. The vast majority of the Irish media have remained shamefully silent as this has happened or worse still have taken part in smear campaigns against the campaigners.

The short tape contains many of the other stories the media has refused to report, casually discussed by the Garda in the car.

At 4.35 the Sgt. rings his superior to say he has arrested two people even though he is not really meant to. This is the infamous 'no arrest' policy under which Gardai used violence against campaigners rather than arresting them because the jailing of the Rossport five had led to such public outrage.

At 4.50 and at other intervals they discuss how their methods of moving protesters creates dangers to the protesters and themselves, at 18.30 they have a disagreement over whether if this leads to injuries they will be protected by 'the job' or not.

At 9.05 they reveal that the calling of a National Day of action the following day has lead to the cancellation of all work and the they had demanded that a full unit of the riot squad be sent to the area.

At 11.20 we hear them filling in the overtime forms, the huge Garda presence at Corrib has resulted in million of euro in overtime costs alone as the people of Ireland pay to protect Shell's plundering of our Oil & Gas.

At 23.50 you can just make out them discussing the protests during the June bank holiday in 2008 when a scrum of Garda almost pushed several protesters over a 6m cliff onto the rock below.

This is not a case of a couple of rotton apples, rather this tape is further evidence of the way all sections of the state have been mobilised in aiding Energy corporations plunder the 540 billion worth of Oil & Gas Resources that Ireland has. With such extreme profits to be made is it any surprize that such extreme lengths are being gone to to break the resistance to the Great Oil & Gas Giveaway.

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