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Racist Graffiti Attack in Strabane Sparks Safety Fears and Renewed Hate Crime Warnings

July 11, 2025

— Categories: *Human Rights*



A mother and her daughters have been left traumatised after their home in Strabane, County Tyrone, was targeted in a racially motivated graffiti attack. The words “immigrants out” were painted across the gable wall of their property in the Ballycolman estate on Wednesday evening, prompting police to launch a hate crime investigation.

Uche Ukeje, originally from Nigeria, has lived in Strabane with her two daughters, aged 24 and 14, for two years. She works locally and her youngest daughter attends Holy Cross College. Ms Ukeje described the incident as deeply frightening, telling the press she was struggling to understand why her family was targeted. “We love Strabane and our neighbours. We have never been in trouble. We are not criminals,” she said.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) confirmed it received a report of the vandalism early Thursday morning and is treating the case as a racially-motivated hate crime. Officers are urging anyone with information to come forward.

Though local representatives and community leaders were quick to condemn the incident, questions remain about how such a blatant act of intimidation could occur without detection. While Sinn Féin councillor Paul Boggs called the act “disgusting” and claimed it was unrepresentative of the wider community, some residents have expressed frustration that hate incidents continue to rise despite repeated assurances.

The Strabane Ethnic Community Association also denounced the attack, calling it “sickening” and “incredibly depressing.” Kamini Rao, speaking on behalf of the association, said the family was “valued members of our community, contributing through work and education.” She confirmed the offensive graffiti had been removed swiftly and thanked residents who had supported the family in the aftermath.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident in Crumlin, County Antrim, another immigrant family was forced to leave their home after the words “locals

only" were painted on their front door. That case is also being investigated as a hate crime by the PSNI.

While the vast majority of Northern Ireland communities remain welcoming and tolerant, such acts highlight an unsettling undercurrent of hostility that authorities cannot afford to ignore. For all the talk of inclusivity, effective policing and visible deterrence are vital to ensuring law-abiding families, regardless of background, feel safe and respected in their homes.