Human rights commission expresses concerns over partial scrutiny of the new International Protection Bill

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) commented on the International Protection Bill as it passed through the remaining Dáil stages.

The International Protection Bill will proceed to Seanad Éireann without full consideration of the proposed amendments.

After 8 hours of debate, only 14 of approximately 300 amendments were discussed. Stage 3 proceedings were taken on the floor of the Dáil rather than in committee, meaning there was no line-by-line scrutiny of the bill. On 25 February 2026, after just over 4 hours of discussion, the bill was guillotined after reaching amendment 22. As a result, there was no meaningful engagement with the amendments, and the vast majority were not debated at all.

The amendments that have not been discussed in the Dáil include proposals that would have:

- Prevented the unlawful detention of children;
- Ensured that invasive medical examinations to determine a child's age are conducted by appropriately qualified medical professionals;
- Strengthened protections for victims of trafficking; and
- Safeguarded the fundamental rights of vulnerable people seeking international protection.

Changes to family reunification provisions were also not debated.

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Under the proposed family reunification changes, refugees, people whom the State has already formally recognised as unable to safely return to their countries of origin, would be required to wait 2 years before being permitted to apply for family reunification. In practice, due to existing administrative delays, families could face separation for 3-4 years.

This would result in prolonged separation of parents from children. Teenagers under 16 at the time of arrival risk “aging out” of eligibility during the waiting period. Families would remain divided across conflict zones and displacement camps for extended periods.

Last week, the Commission published a detailed list of suggested amendments to the Bill. It identifies areas where the legislation, as drafted, risks failing to comply with Ireland’s obligations under national and international human rights and equality law.

Source(s)

- Irish Human rights and Equality Commission | Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta an Duine agus Comhionannas (26 February, 2026), [No meaningful debate on International Protection Bill as it passes through remaining Dáil stages], https://www.ihrec.ie/news-press/no-meaningful-debate-on-international-protection-bill-as-it-passes-through-remaining-d%C3%A1il-stages

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