

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office
First Floor, Avoca Court
Temple Road, Blackrock
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750
fax +353 1 233 8695

BRUSSELS

Front Line Defenders – EU Office
Square Marie-Louise 72
1000 Brussels
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383
fax +32 2 230 0028

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Ireland: Human rights defenders charged for peaceful protest action at Shannon Airport

On 4 November 2025, the trial of human rights defenders **Áine Treanor**, **Aindriú de Buitléir** and **Eimear Walshe**, now known as The Shannon Three, is set to commence at Ennis Circuit Court in Ireland. The human rights defenders are charged with “trespassing” under Section 11 of the Public Order Act and “interfering with the operation, management and security of an airport” under Section 47 of the Air Navigation and Transport Act 1998. The charges were brought against the three human rights defenders for a peaceful protest in which they entered the runway of Shannon Airport to raise awareness of the airport’s use by the US military on 30 March 2024. If convicted, they may face a fine up to €500,000 and imprisonment of up to three years.

Áine Treanor is a woman human rights defender who has been involved in Palestine solidarity organising in Galway since returning from the West Bank in 2022, where she spent three months as a human rights monitor witnessing the Israeli occupation and the apartheid state. She is a founding member of Slí Eile, a de-colonial anti-Capitalist climate action group rooted in Ireland and the Galway Feminist Collective.

Aindriú de Buitléir is a human rights defender, artist and community organiser living in the Connemara Gaeltacht. He works with Tinteán and BÁNÚ to highlight the urgent housing crisis which threatens the cultural and linguistic heritage of Gaeltacht communities. He is a member of the artist collective Gliogar, organising events that build solidarity between the local community and newly arrived migrant communities. He acts as the co-treasurer of the Galway Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Eimear Walshe is an Irish contemporary artist and writer whose work explores land, housing, sexuality, and inheritance in Ireland. They represented Ireland at the 2024 Venice Biennale. They were arrested with two others on the 30th of March 2024 for protesting the US military use of Shannon during the genocide in Gaza.

On 30 March 2024, Áine Treanor, Aindriú de Buitléir and Eimear Walshe entered the runway area of Shannon Airport and approached one of the two US military aircrafts which were parked there, holding a Palestine flag and a banner that read “US Military out of Shannon”.

The demand to remove US military from Shannon, a site of monthly peaceful vigils and protests for over two decades, has long been a central focus of Ireland’s peace and Palestine solidarity movements, alongside calls for divestment from Israel and an end to the trade of weapons and goods linked to violations of international humanitarian law.

The human rights defenders have stated that for more than 20 years, monthly vigils, protests, and parliamentary questions have failed to prompt the Irish Government to engage in an open, democratic discussion on the use of Shannon Airport as a *de facto* military base since 2002. They describe their action as a non-violent act of last resort, intended to draw attention to the ongoing militarisation of Shannon Airport and the Government’s disregard for public opposition.

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The human rights defenders sat peacefully on the ground near the aircraft in an attempt to block it from taking off. They were then arrested by An Garda Síochána, and were taken to Shannon Garda Station, where they were detained for approximately seven hours. The police took their statements and when Aindriú de Buitléir wished to give his statement in Irish, a translator had to be brought in for assistance. Approximately seven hours later, the human rights defenders were taken to Nenagh District Court where they posted bail on the condition that they report to their local Garda station once a week and not enter any part of Shannon Airport past the security.

Since 30 March 2024, a series of administrative hearings have taken place regarding the case. The initial charge of committing a public order offence was withdrawn and replaced with more a serious charge under the Air Navigation and Transport Act 1998, relating to the alleged obstruction of the safe management of airports, and with “trespassing” under Section 11 of the Public Order Act. The Ennis District Court subsequently declared a lack of jurisdiction over the matter and, with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the case was transferred to the Ennis Circuit Court. Following these developments, the trial, set to be in front of a jury and judge, has been scheduled to commence on 4 November 2025, more than a year and a half after the proceedings began. It is not yet clear if the trespassing charge, which is currently at the Ennis District Court, will be joined with the obstruction of the safe management of airports charge at the Circuit Court as the indictments have yet to be served to the human rights defenders.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern at the potential criminalisation of human rights defenders Áine Treanor, Aindriú de Buitléir and Eimear Walshe for their peaceful direct action in defense of human rights. Their protest sought to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Ireland's potential complicity in military operations contributing to it. Front Line Defenders also notes the the slow pace of the prosecution and the failure to serve indictments to date.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the authorities in Ireland to:

1. Ensure that all charges against human rights defenders Áine Treanor, Aindriú de Buitléir, and Eimear Walshe are reviewed with a view to dismissal, given that their actions were peaceful and undertaken in defense of human rights.
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Ireland are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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