

Opposition to victim-blaming in Irish rape trial

Politician holds up a pair of **knickers** in Irish parliament in protest against misogynistic **rape** myths

Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text:

to blame: to assign responsibility for a problem to someone/something

trial: a formal examination of evidence by a judge, typically before a jury

knickers: a woman's or girl's undergarments

rape: the crime, typically committed by a man, of forcing another person to have sexual intercourse with the offender against their will.

thong: a tiny bathing garment or pair of knickers like a G-string.

lace: a fine open fabric of cotton or silk

incongruous: not in harmony with the surroundings or other aspects

Last week, an Irish politician held up a pair of **knickers** in Parliament. Ruth Coppinger did it to protest at the way a teenage girl was treated in a **rape** case.

The lawyer for the man accused of raping her, who was found not guilty in the end, told the jury: "You have to look at the way she was dressed. She was wearing a **thong** with a **lace** front." Ruth Coppinger says she used the underwear to highlight "routine victim-blaming." The unusual gesture has led to a series of protests in Ireland about consent and how women are treated in sexual assault cases. It's sparked a social media campaign and a washing-line of knickers in Dublin city centre.

The previous week, in summing up the trial, defence barrister Elizabeth O'Connell had said: "Does the evidence out-rule the possibility that she was attracted to the defendant and was open to meeting someone and being with someone? You have to look at the way she was dressed. She was wearing a thong with a lace front."

It is estimated only 10% of the sexual assaults or rapes that are even reported result in a conviction. One third of these convictions result in suspended or partially suspended sentences. The above comments have only helped add insult to the injury that rape survivors face.

Ruth said that while it may seem **incongruous** to hold up a thong in the national parliament, it's even more so for underwear to be used in court as evidence against a woman. Her words and actions were a defiant stance against the blatant injustice of misogynistic rape myths being perpetuated in open court.

Ruth's bold actions, alongside protests helped bring the reality of victim-blaming in the courts to both national and significantly international attention. The level of coverage received by both the print and broadcast media globally is unprecedented. The hashtag #ThisIsNotConsent alongside pictures of thongs has also trended on social media internationally as an act of solidarity by women disgusted by the comments of O'Connell, and the culture of victim-blaming that exists within the courts system.

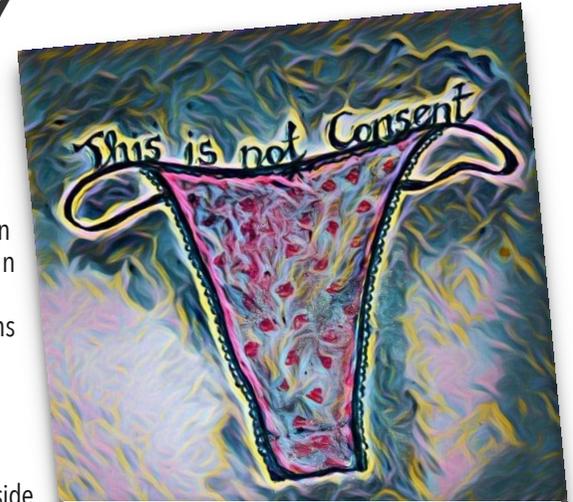
This attention and solidarity, speaks to a growing anger and radicalisation in opposition to gender-based violence and harassment, and the oppression of women in society. The mood amongst women, young and LGBTQ people that "enough is enough" is now widespread. This is seen with the emergence of the #MeToo phenomenon and movement late last year on social media, in the mass movements against machismo and violence against women in Latin America through the #NiUnaMenos movement and in the strike against sexism that took place this year in the Spanish State on International Women's Day.

Written by ECP coach *John Andrew Hird* [Watch the video here](#)

Let's chat about that!

Write your opinions and send them to your ECP coach!

- Have there been similar cases in the Spanish State?
- What is sexism to you?
- What kind of sexism is there in your society? Give examples
- What would you do if you heard someone in the street or at work making very sexist comments?
- Have you ever been a victim of sexism?



#ThisIsNotConsent alongside pictures of thongs is a trending topic on social media



Ruth Coppinger showing the knickers in parliament



The washing-line of knickers in Dublin city centre

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**WhatsApp John for more details on:
657 73 13 54**



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WhatsApp Alison for more details: 608 426492

USING THE IMPERATIVE

You can use the imperative to give orders, to give advice, and to tell other people what you would like them to do (if you use "please").

To make the imperative, use the infinitive of the verb without 'to': **"Stop doing that!" "Go away!" "Leave her alone!" "Get lost!" "Be careful!" "Watch out!"**

To make a negative imperative, put "do not" or "don't" before the verb: **"Don't do that!" "Don't be stupid!" "Don't ignore what I'm saying!" "Do not get any closer!" "Do not, whatever you do, press that big, red button!"**

Examples using please: **"Please move away." "Hold this a moment please." "Please let the other people through." "Give me a moment please."**

Combatting sexism

Ruth Coppinger is a Solidarity TD (member of parliament) and Socialist Party member who campaigns against sexism and in favour of women's rights. In Ireland Ruth is involved in ROSA which is a socialist feminist and pro-choice activist group.

ROSA is named after Rosa Parks, the inspirational black campaigner who famously refused to give up her seat for a white passenger, sparking the Montgomery bus boycott of the Civil Rights Movement. And also after Rosa Luxemburg, exceptional and leading socialist theoretician and activist of the early 20th century, killed for her revolutionary politics in 1919.

ROSA <http://rosa.ie/>

Sister campaigns in the Spanish State:

Libres y Combativas <http://libresycombativas.net/>