

Bill of Rights Outreach Report

Victim/Survivor Groups

March 2008



Lesley Macaulay

Table of Contents

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Summary of Main Issues.....	4
3. Summary of Issues by Group	5
4. Summary of Comments	11
5. Recommendations for Follow Up	22
Appendix I: Outreach Work Report	24
Appendix II: Database of Groups Contacted	28



1. Introduction

This is the report of the Bill of Rights Outreach Officer for Victims/Survivor Groups for the period November 2007 – March 2008.

The report provides:

- A summary of the main issues highlighted by groups during the awareness raising process
- A description of each group contacted and an outline of the main issues discussed
- A summary of the diverse range of comments by groups contacted
- A series of recommendations for follow up work and future consultation processes
- A set of associated appendices including a work report and a database of groups contacted

Many of the groups contacted within this sector stressed the need for confidentiality around their detailed comments, and to respect this request, detailed comments are not attributed in this report.



2. Summary of Main Issues

The main issues highlighted by Victims/Survivor Groups were as follows:

- The Bill of Rights should clearly state the definition of a victim.
- The Bill of Rights should address poor and unequally distributed compensation and financial support given to victims. It should address specific support and financial needs
- The Bill of Rights should address the need for good therapeutic support for victims of the Troubles, which is tailored to meet the particular needs of the victim and is provided by medical staff with training and qualifications in this specific field.
- The Bill of Rights should contribute to the acknowledgment of victims.
- The Bill of Rights should support disclosure of the truth, access to information and appropriate communication with families of victims.
- The Bill of Rights should be implemented effectively, be accessible to all and cost should not be a barrier to using the Bill of Rights.



3. Summary of Issues by Group

WAVE

Contact: Pat McAuley, Gordon Buchanan, Hanna Munter, Stephen Harkin

Group purpose: Helping people bereaved, injured or traumatised as a result of the Troubles

The Issues: WAVE's amendments to section 10 of the NIHRC draft on victims' rights for the Bill of Rights

Ex POP

Contact: John Cassidy

Group purpose: Support group for ex prisoners

The Issues: Definition of a victim
Employment rights for ex prisoners
Rehabilitation back into society
Rights for prisoners while in prison

Cunamh

Contact: Kathy Nellis

Group purpose: Supporting and promoting community led mental health and well being.

The issues: Acknowledgment of victims
Compensation
Funding
Access of information

UDR and Royal Irish Regiment

Contact: Liz Clarke

Group purpose: Provide support, advice and social activities for ex UDR and RIR

The Issues: Definition of a victim
Acknowledging the UDR role. Feel air brushed out of history
Stigma and poor image



Homes United Against Ruthless Terrorism (HURT)

Contact: Gareth Porter

Group purpose: Providing support and social activities for victims

The Issues: Definition of a victim
Access of information
Equality of treatment for all cases regarding resource investigation
Collusion

Saver /nav er

Contact: SabineMcCallistar

Group purpose: Bringing relief to victims of the troubles in South and North Armagh and Mid Ulster, who are suffering from hardship or distress

The Issues: Difficulty in accessing compensation
Hardship experienced by widows.
Children's education affected by death of loved one

Omagh Support and Self Help Group

Contact: Michael Gallagher, Donna McAuley

Group purpose: Providing support for victims of the Omagh Bomb and lobbying for justice

The Issues: Definition of a victim
Access of information
Memorial to Omagh Bomb victims
Compensation difficulties

Survivors of Trauma

Contact: Marie Close

Group purpose: Supporting victims in the BT14 area of Belfast through therapy, educational programmes and advice

The Issues: Definition of a victim
Equality for everyone in the area regarding housing and education
Compensation difficulties
Access of information



West Tyrone Voice

Contact: Hazlett Lynch

Group purpose: Support for victims in west Tyrone, lobbying and campaigning of victims behalf

The Issues: What will a Bill of Rights achieve?
Definition of a victim
Representation of victims on the Forum

Ballymon ey Women's Group

Contact: Mary McCusker

Group purpose: Support and training for local rural woman

Issues: Poor housing in the area
Paramilitaries still control the housing estates
We are all victims of the Troubles, stole our childhood
How can Bill of Rights help?

WAVE – Mens' Project

Contact: Pat McAuley

Group purpose: Provide support for men who have been affected by the troubles

Issues: How is a Bill of Rights going to be used?
How will it help us?
Is a lot of money required in order to use it?
Will everyone adhere to it

VAST

Contact: Marian Walsh & Sis Cobaine

Group purpose: Providing support for families who have been affected by the troubles in the Falls Road area.

Issues: Equality of treatment for victims
Lack of financial support and therapeutic support



PAI N

Contact: Lyn Sherida n
Group purp ose: Providing support mainly RUC widow's and security force families
Issues: What good will a Bill of Rights do?
Lack of financial support
Hardships of widows bringing up a family

Mount Vernon Community Centre

Contact: Billy Hutchinson
Group purp ose: Community Dev elopment and prov iding educational opportunities
Issues: How will a Bill of Rights he lp people in poverty?
How can it be used pract ically?
Will it be expen sive to use?
Funding barriers

Disabled Police Officers Association

Contact: Elwin Ward
Group purp ose: Providing an information service, socialising and enh ancing quality of life for ex police who have been injured t hrough the Troubl es
Issues: Definition of a victim
Acknowledgment of the work t he RUC did
Stigma/image of t he RUC

Healing Through Rememb ering

Contact: Kate Turner and Ruth Moore
Group purp ose: Provide informat ion, support, faci litate worksh ops and conduct resear ch into healing and dealing from the past .
Issues: How will it be used?
How will Consultation process be conduct ed?



Community Restorative Justice

Contact: Jim Auld

Group purpose: Providing and lobbying for justice for residents in West Belfast

Issues: No victim's representative on Forum .
State needs to acknowledge its injustices.
Lack of Compensation. Financial support done on the cheap.

Victims and Survivors Matters Programme

Contact: Sean Coll

Group purpose: Therapeutic support for victims and survivors

Group issues: Careful planning and engagement of victims regarding Consultations on Bill of Rights
Inequality of compensation

The Koram Centre

Contact: Jeff Barr

Group purpose: Specialising in the needs of Trauma

Issues: Victims to be integrated into all the issues
Bill of Rights should address the needs of individuals and not necessary groups

Towards Healing and Understanding

Contact: Sara Cook

Group purpose: Facilitating workshops and training in dealing with the past

Issues:



The Ely Centre

Contact: Lee McDowell

Group purpose:

Issues:

Teach na Failte

Contact: Fra Halligan

Group purpose: Supporting ex prisoners in West Belfast

Issues: Integration of ex prisoners into society
Rights for prisoner's families



4. Summary of Comments

A wide range of comments were recorded in relation to a Bill of Rights.

General Views on a Bill of Rights for NI

- Don't believe in it.
- Toothless process.
- Will it achieve anything?
- Will the PSNI adhere to it? It's not going to be easy for the Police to support it.
- The public will have to take ownership for it. People will have to own it.
- There a lot of anger out there about victims. Will this help us in any way?
- Most victims live on the poverty line. Authorities don't care. They haven't shown any remorse.
- Victims of the troubles are not the same as other victims.....we've been forgotten and seen as a nuisance in the New Northern Ireland.
- Support for the 4 new victims commissioners. Good idea.
- Awareness made of the difference between deaths i.e republican victims and Police victims. Experienced a dismissive attitude at hospital when medical staff found out the victim was a republican.
- Many RUC widows felt guilty for remarriage, and needed help and support to move on.
- Who are the people who will use the power of The Bill of Rights?
- Will it be expensive to use?
- It's a disgrace that there are no victims on the Forum. The CJ&V subgroup should re-sign as they are not representative of victims.
- The Forum is an "Old Boys Network". There is arrogance about professional victims workers.



- The Bill of Rights process has been completely wrong. Overlooking a victim's representative on the Forum has been a major mistake.
- The State started the conflict and prolonged it. Therefore the State should take responsibility and acknowledge its wrong doings. There is over 40 years of resentment and humiliation which has been caused by the State. If the state acknowledged its wrong doings, then that would be a start.
- We must ensure that a Bill of Rights will work.
- Unionists are not helping or supporting loyalist areas, and have abandoned them. Education levels are very low and poor housing but the Unionist politicians don't want to know. No one is protecting the social need in loyalist areas. Protestant community is split over the Bill of Rights.
- We need something to protect us (protestants/loyalists areas)
- Police are still mentally torturing and intimidating residents to get information.
- How will it work?
- Needs to work!
- For it to work, does the person using the Bill require a lot of money for legal fees?
- How will it represent Loyalists?
- Will it be yet again another "lip service"?
- PSNI don't care about Rights
- Will we have access to use it and how?
- How will a Bill of Rights be used?
- Bill of Rights should address the needs of individuals and not necessarily victims' groups
- Need to give space and support to integrate victims into overall services
- When will it be reviewed and up-dated?



Definition of a victim

- Extremely difficult to come up with a definition which will get all round support
- Everyone who suffered at the hands of terrorists, including wives, children and family members who suffered stress, uncertainty, upset of living a normal lifestyle.
- All those who were impacted physically and/or emotionally
- Also 'hidden victims' (victims of the troubles who do not want to be part of any recognized victim support groups but are in great need of support)
- A victim is a survivor. They had no choice in becoming a victim.
- Victims are those people through no fault of their own became a victim
- Victim is someone who has been affected by the troubles but was working on the side of the law. Someone who is not involved in illegal activity.
- Someone who has been mentally and/or physically affected as a result of terrorism
- A victim is not someone who knows what they are doing when they're doing it. Both the Paramilitaries force members are not victims.
- The whole community which has been oppressed by the State sees themselves as victims. The State is and was the perpetrator. Paramilitaries are victims as they had to defend themselves against the State.
- Everyone in this area (TSN) is a victim of the Troubles. Anyone who has suffered in any way due to the troubles is a victim; this includes the mental torture by the security forces which still exist today.
- There should not be a hierarchy of victims.
- Recognize that there is more than one type of victim.
- Victims treated as normal citizens.



Acknowledgement/recognition for victims

- Feeling airbrushed out
- Proper acknowledgement is at human level - validation
- Overcoming a poor image of the UDR, public seem to have no empathy or understanding of their situation
- There should be a Day to remember the troops and uniformed services
- Day of Remembrance poorly attended in Derry – achieved little
- Time to move on
- Victims have felt forgotten, but it's time to move on
- Truth about the past: Most of the past was hidden in a thick fog, and those who are going through the healing of emotional trauma will need support, if they get to the truth, and support if they don't. Knowing the truth about the past could potentially breed more pain if at the end of the day those who are found guilty are seen to have gained more than the victims
- A Victim's Forum: Should be set up to deal with issues and ways of dealing with the past. Great care should be taken as to who will sit on this forum. (Our motto: We are victims of the past BUT we are not prisoners). This Forum should be set up under direction of the new Victim's Commissioners.
- Victims and their families have lost out on many opportunities because the main bread winner of their family died as a direct result of the troubles. Education and financial opportunities were lost; mental and psychological support was not available and the rippled effects of the troubles are transferred over many generations.
- The future must be built on trust and honour and recognition and with they need to be supported to be actively involved in the peace process. Victims need



to receive the psychological, financial and economical support and help they need to move forward.

- Bertha McDougall's recommendations were valid and we hope that they are going to be implemented.
- Acknowledgement depends very much on the person, if they want it or not.
- Finding it hard to move on when still fighting for justice. Many still feel angry. (Omagh)
- Very difficult process encountered when deciding on and laying a memorial stone to mark the bomb site. Relationship with local Council became strained due to "red tape"
- The past is the past. ...let it remain there.
- The work of the RUC has been pushed out of the way very quickly and in history they might well have a confused and negative image. People don't want to be reminded of the past. The RUC is a dirty word. This has been projected from the top.
- The George Cross has not practically helped RUC members. The job affected everyone in the family which created difficult family situations.
- Government choose cheaper financial option for RUC members.
- Many victims feel demonised. They should have to the right to be remembered with dignity.
- Your last human right is the right to be remembered
- The Mental Health Care Sector could recognise victims of The Troubles as different from other victims, and the treatment, therapy and after care should reflect this.
- Churches and Government also need to acknowledge the Bill of Rights.
- No memorial day is required for victims



Compensation

- Some people too proud to have asked for any financial support
- Pitiful and embarrassing the financial support that was given. ie £300.00 to a woman with 6 children
- Compensation has been very poor. How do you calculate a fair and equal amount to each case?
- Should be financial support for young people now going through university and further education, who had been affected by the troubles
- Should be specific support for widows (not security force widows) who have had to bring up their children with little or no financial support. Now putting their through university.
- Long fight to get compensation e.g. compensation received 9 years after the incident.
- Unfair system as it seems to give in one hand and takes from the other.
- Paltry sums of money to widows
- One third of RUC members are in financial difficulty.
- Compensation not sufficient enough to provide a good standard of living.
- Six million allocated to PSNI widows... this is unfair
- Bloomfield singled out security families and everyone should be treated the same.
- Families have been penalised because of lack of compensation...unfair system
- Free legal aid for families. Many have been traumatised again by giving evidence at tribunals.
- If you were in "the know" you were looked after.
- RUC widows had to move to a safe area, which caused upheaval. Lots of families had to tell lies to protect their loved ones from what job they did. Sometimes even the children were unaware that their father was in the RUC.
- Money to some is no compensation to their loss. It was a struggle for many women bringing up kids.



- Solicitors abused the system.in claiming from Legal Aid and charging a fee.
- Widow's child benefit stopped when child left school.
- Memorial Fund caused more problems than they solved. They paid out money to the wrong people.
- NHS treatment and one stop shops never worked.
- Compensation and support is vitally needed. The Government has done things on the cheap.

Therapeutic support

- Impossible to get proper and specialised therapeutic support for trauma.
- Many did not receive any therapeutic support at the time and carry the trauma with them.
- Not interested in dealing with past issues regarding the troubles.
- Not everyone ready for counselling
- Counselling still seen as scary and too woolly
- Rural areas do not have adequate Trauma centres.
- Strategy should be set up for young people to help them in their education and future so that they stay in Northern Ireland. Help should be given to victim families (those who are over 40 yrs) whose children now need help to put their children through university, get them educated where their parents had lost out on their education and give them a fairer chance.
- A need for trained paid counsellors who are qualified to identify troubled areas (mental health issues) and deal with these issues in a confidential manner.
- There should be continuity of therapy and counselling for young people
- Structures should be put in place so there is a signposting mechanism for relevant support
- More specialised medical support is required to deal with victims of the troubles issues. This support is especially needed in the field of trauma. Psychiatrists could be trained in dealing with victims of conflict.



- Waiting lists are too long when needing to see a psychiatrist.
- The Mental Health Care Sector could recognise victims of The Troubles as different from other victims, and the treatment, therapy and after care should reflect this.
- Unqualified people are making decisions about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This has been, and still is unsatisfactory.
- Medical sector don't seem to have the empathy required to work with victims of the troubles.
- Seriously psychologically damaged people have been treated by workers with no or limited experience in working with victims of conflict

Access to Information

- Bloody Sunday inquiry has helped in some way to move victims on, but how far back do you go to seek information in order to get justice. A long and frustration process.
- HET, unsure if it's a good thing or a bad thing....bringing back memories. What's important is that the Truth is revealed.
- Should have access to as much information as Authorities can provide. Authorities should be held accountable for wrong doings.
- Very unhappy with the service that HET provided. They just relay information back to victims with no new details.
- Right to be protected against those who should have protection. This has been no duty of care to ordinary citizens
- More confidence if truth process was more transparent.
- It should be illegal to use juveniles as informers, under any conditions.



Funding

- Memorial Fund: Very difficult to access funds for victims.
- Humiliating for some victims who find that they had to prove themselves in order to access funding.
- Trust fund for victims is needed and this could replace the Memorial fund and provide support to victims who fall in hard times. E.g. trying to make life a little easier for them as they grow older.
- Core Funding: Some support groups are over staffed and others are under staffed. Staff should include a paid trained befriender and if possible a paid trained counsellor.
- Assets agency: Money should be allocated to victims from the funds made by those who perpetrated crimes in Northern Ireland through the sale of books on their criminal activities etc and should be added to the proposed trust fund for victims and their families.
- Memorial Fund made it difficult and embarrassing in having to “prove” your grief, loss and circumstances
- Investment needs to be put into groups that can cope with demands and needs of victims.

Ex prisoners rights

- Separate section in Bill of Rights for ex-prisoners to address their issues
- Number of prisoners left unsupported after prison sentence
- Significant percentage of ex prisoners are alcoholic
- Compensation and acknowledgement for what was experienced as an abusive system
- A service to provide support in addressing physical and emotional needs, as well as support for families who encountered abuse and uncertainty when loved ones taken away
- A service with holistic approach to improving lives of ex prisoners



Criminal Justice regarding victim/survivor issues.

- Equality of treatment for all cases regarding resource investigation
- Collusion
- Extradition
- Transparency of investigation – investigators to be held accountable
- Lack of desire to make arrests- the State's mistakes brought to light
- Collection of evidence not satisfactorily carried out professionally
- Sentencing – victims should be involved if they desire to do so.
- Legal precedent set for cases of 8 years
- Families to be notified when prisoner released back into community
- No legal assistance available to take cases to Europe
- Lack of Human Rights Lawyers to defend innocent victims
- Court layout very intimidating and insensitive to victims needs
- Important to be informed on criminal justice issues
- There needs to be more communication with victims by police and court – information has been given to victims very late – giving no time to deal with the information either practically or emotionally

Non support for a Bill of Rights

- No need for a Bill of Rights when the European Convention of Human Rights covers everything
- Bill of Rights is republican led
- Its “unbritish” and “uneuropean”
- Where does it slot in regarding the Constitution – what is superior and what is inferior to it?
- It's an attempt to undermine the Union
- Its disintegration rather than integration



The Consultation Process

- Important to engage the 4 Trauma Advisory Panels.
- Victims groups are “consultation out”
- Consultations should be open to everyone, and advertised in local newspapers.
- No special engagement or consultation should be shown to any one victims group.
- Careful of people who are not part of a group, and of a knee jerk reaction.
- Consult over a wide geographical region.
- Consult with individuals as well as professional victims groups
- Give victim’s groups responsibility to engage local people in their area and let them conduct consultations. Make this part of the funding package!



5. Recommendations for Follow Up

The Bill of Rights should be implemented effectively, be accessible to all and cost should not be a barrier to using the Bill of Rights.

The following are recommendations for follow up:

PR Strategy

The Bill of Rights should have a ongoing PR Strategy which should aim to do the following:

- i. heighten the profile
- ii. explain the purpose of a Bill of Rights
- iii. provide a platform for the general public to discuss, question and contribute to the process. This should be done through TV and radio programmes.
- iv. explain how a Bill of Rights can be used
- v. encourage schools debates on the Bill of Rights through the citizenship programme in schools

Consultation Process

The draft Bill of Rights should undergo an intensive Consultation process to include victim/survivor opinions and views. An administrative consultation or a traditional public meeting style consultation is unlikely to reach victim/survivor groups effectively, therefore the possible process options to be considered are:



Option 1

The Consultation process should be carried out by involving the NI Trauma Advisory Panel. The Consultations should be held sub-regionally and an open invitation published in local newspapers and media.

Members of the Bill of Rights Forum, the Trauma Advisory Panel, Victims Commissioners and Legal Representatives should be present to listen to the views and opinions expressed by those present.

Option 2

The Consultation Process should be carried out through independent facilitation, engaging victim/survivor group from the 6 overarching groups: women, young people, rural, TSN, people with disabilities and older people.

Four victim/survivor groups should be engaged from each overarching groups to get a clear consensus of issues.

Option 3

Local Consultations conducted by victim's groups who would take responsibility for engaging their member's views and opinions. Also they would be responsible for engaging the wider community, outside of the victim's sector.



Appendix I: Outreach Work Report

November 2007

Contacted by phone 45 victim/survivor groups as introduction.

Attended WAVE Conference on Wednesday 7 November 2007

Attended 3 Criminal Justice & Victims sub group meetings giving a verbal report to the sub group members.

With the Criminal Justice & victims sub group helped organise and plan Consultation Event inviting victim/survivor groups to make written or verbal presentations.

Consultation meeting for victim/survivor groups was carried out on:

Friday 12 November 2007 at Stormont.

The groups who attended were as follows:

Victims Support NI



Victims and Survivors of Trauma
WAVE
Coiste na nI archimi
Disabled Police Officers Association
Greater Shankill Alternatives

Attended 3 training meetings

December 2007

Organised contact/invitation letter by using the Community Relations Council's database, to over 100 victims groups and other relevant contacts, providing details and date of Consultation.

Made contact with 28 groups by phone creating awareness of Decembers Consultation with Criminal Justice & Victims sub group.

Arranged venue and technical facilities for Consultation.

Consultation meeting for victims/survivor groups was on:
Thursday 13 December 2007 at NIVCA.

The following groups attended and gave verbal presentations:

Shankill Stress & Trauma
Pat Funcane Centre
Relatives for Justice
Coiste na nI archimi
VAST

Attended 2 Criminal Justice & Victims meetings
Attended 1 training and 2 Forum Meetings

January 2008

Groups contact in January 2008:

WAVE, Derry
WAVE, Ballymoney
WAVE, Belfast
WAVE, Omagh



Ex POP, Derry
Cunamh, Derry
UDR and Royal Irish Regiment
HURT
Savner/naver
Omagh Support and Self Help Group
Survivors of Trauma
Ballymoney Women's Group
West Tyrone Voice

Groups contacted in February 2008:

WAVE men's group
VAST
PAIN
The Koram Centre
South Down Action for Healing Wounds
Community Restorative Justice
The Ely Centre
MCDF, Mount Vernon Community Centre
Kenny Donaldson
Healing Through Remembering
The 174 Trust
Disabled Police Officers' Association
South West Initiative
Teach na Fai lte
CFNI
Towards Healing and Understanding
North Coast Integrated College – Citizenship Programme

Groups contacted in March 2008

26



The Koram Centre
The Ely Centre
Teach na Fai lte

Towards Healing and Understanding
Western Health and Social Care Trust – Victims and
Survivor Matters Programme
Trauma and Recovery Network



Appendix II: Database of Groups Contacted

Group	CJ&V Consultation	Visit	Phone	Submission
CRUISE Ann Townsend 02890434600	v		v	
DisabledPoliceOfficers' Assoc Elwin Ward 02890700719		v	v	
Cunamh Kathy Nellis 02871288868		v	v	
Bridge of Hope Irene Sherry 02890221022			v	v
FAIR William Wilkinson 02837552619	v		v	
Omagh Families Support Group Donna McAuley Michael Gallagher 02882259877		v	v	
Relatives for Justice ClaireReilly/MarkSykes Mark Thompson 02890220100	v		v	
Pat Funucane Centre Paul O'Connor 02871268846	v		v	
Saver/naver Sabine Mccalister 02837552808		v	v	
Shankill Stress & Trauma Alan Wardle 02890205305	v		v	



Group	CJ&V consultation	Visit	Phone	Submission
VAST Victims and Survivors Trust Marie Close 02890749944	v	v	v	
Victims Support N Ireland Susan Reid 02890244039 Victims Survivors Rural Network	v	v	v	v
The Koram Centre Jeff Barr 02871886181		v	v	
Wider Circle Martina Mullan O Hare 02890245595			v	
WAVE Belfast Pat McAuley 02890781165	v	v	v	v
WAVE Ballymoney Brian/Velma 02827669900 WAVE Derry Stephen 02871266655		v	v	v
WAVE Omagh Jean 02882259979		v	v	v
WAVE Armagh Ann 02837511599			v	v
EX POP John Cassidy 07763834452		v	v	v
HAVEN Breandan Mackin 02890961108			v	
Cross Maura Keily 028908747450			v	



Group	CJ&V consultation	Visit	Phone	Submission
South Down Action for Healing Wounds 02840631259			v	
Homes United Against Ruthless Terrorism Gareth Porter 02838317557		v	v	
Greater Shankill Alternatives Jennifer Corknell 02890311420	v		v	v
EPIC Tom Roberts/David Colvin 02890743330			v	
Teach na Failte Fra Halligan 02890321024		v	v	
PAIN Lynn Sheridan 07817319744 Towards Healing and Understanding Sara Cook 02871370685		v v	v v	
The Ely Centre, Enniskillen Lee McDowell 02866320977		v	v	
South west Initiative Sean Coil 02866344104		v	v	
The 174 Trust, community organization Bill Shaw 02890747114			v	
Coiste Dr Mick Beyers 02890200770	v	v		v
UDR & Royal Irish Regiment Liz Clarke		v	v	
Bridge of Hope Irene Sherry 02890221022			v	v



The Wider Circle Martina Mullan O Hare 02840628758		v	
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