

**EXCLUSIVE**

BY JOHN HAND  
Chief Reporter

**A BRAVE rape survivor has revealed she does not feel safe from her vile attacker - as he fled from the latest community he tried to integrate in.**

Debbie Cole told how she gets waves of anxiety about sex fiend Robert Melia, who surfaced in Blessington, Co Wicklow, in recent weeks.

Courageous Debbie was just 19 when Melia raped her in Dublin in 1989, for which the sicko got a six-year sentence in 1991.

The thug later went on to attack four more women - including three in one month following his release for the attack on Debbie.

Since his release from his latest jail term, Melia has been run out of a number of communities he tried to settle in across Dublin.

In the past few weeks the pervert popped up in Blessington, where he was living in a house and begging outside shops.

Following a revolt from the community, he fled over the weekend.

But the uncertainty of where the beast is located still affects Debbie more than three decades later.

The 51-year-old told the Irish Mirror: "I am only after being sitting there a few minutes ago and you know sometimes when you get that really uneasy feeling?"

"And I had that on my thoughts - I don't know where he is. And that randomly came into my head.

"It was 32 years ago two weeks ago since my attack by him.

"It's horrible that after all of this time I'm still anxious at not knowing where he is or is he going to pop up where I live - it's just horrible.

"And people should not have to live that way because they're the victim."

Debbie, who now lives outside Dublin, to this day struggles to come back to her home city.

She explained: "Just before he was first released, I used to spend a lot of time going up and down to Dublin and stuff and I found myself having quite a lot of anxiety attacks going up Henry Street or Talbot Street, places like that.

**MASKS**

"Then I went up once since the whole Covid hit when people were wearing masks and that freaked me out completely because I couldn't tell who was who.

"That's my home base, Dublin. And 32 years after that, to not feel safe to go and go to the zoo and go shopping. I feel the Government and justice system has let me down and so many other victims as well."

She believes judges have failed by not handing out tougher sentences.

She added: "They are not weighing up the life-long impact on that person's victims, their families, their mental health, their physical health, social health - every aspect of a person's life is affected by that horrific trauma and the judges are not taking that into account."

Melia, aged in his 50s, has been assaulted on a number of occasions as he turned up in Dublin communities. Debbie believes the only

**DANGER Robert Melia**



# It's 32yrs since beast Melia raped me... and I still get scared he will appear

**Debbie's fear after serial sex attacker out on loose**

**SURVIVOR**  
Debbie Cole



way you can deal with such sex pests is having GPS monitoring systems.

She said: "I think the only solution to that and for people around the country to feel safe from these monsters is to have GPS tracking. "Because it is the only way their rights are not being infringed on in terms of safety and the public's rights are first and foremost because they know they are being protected."

Melia's presence in Blessington sparked widespread fear among the community.

Local Independent Cllr Gerry O'Neill told the Irish Mirror: "I had a lot of calls and a lot of fear was in the area. People were genuinely

scared having read and seen his record.

"It's a bit crazy really that someone so lethal and dangerous could be let loose.

"I'd imagine someone who has just been released from jail after a sentence for such horrible crimes should be put into some step-down services so they just don't land on a community like that."

Melia, of Shangan Gardens, Ballymun, was released from his latest stint behind bars in May 2019.

He pleaded guilty to false imprisonment, assault causing harm and making threats to kill at Caulfield's Hotel, Dorset Street Lower, Dublin, in

2013. When this case was in court, it heard how he choked his victim and told her he would take her "up the mountains" to dismember her body.

Debbie later backed former TD Kevin "Boxer" Moran's Bill for tougher sentences on repeat sex offenders, which was passed into law in 2019.

It means the minimum sentence is three-quarters of the maximum term that would apply to the second offence.

Brave Debbie told how she has now "got a voice" and added: "32 years ago I was a victim, but I decided in a matter of hours I was going to be a survivor."

**“Only way is for these monsters to have GPS tracks”**  
DEBBIE COLE ON KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE