

December 15, 2009: Press Release/Invitation to Press Conference:

Department of Justice Contradicts Education Minister on Magdalenes

The Department of Justice contradicts the Minister for Education's statement that the State "did not refer individuals nor was it complicit in referring individuals to Ireland's Magdalene Laundries."

Representatives from Justice for Magdalenes (JFM), the survivor advocacy group that proposed a distinct redress scheme for survivors of the Magdalene Laundries, met with senior officials in the Department of Justice on Monday afternoon. Although senior officials from the Department of Education were scheduled to attend the same meeting, they did not keep the appointment.

At the meeting, Mr. James Martin, Assistant Secretary, stated unequivocally that after the passage of the Criminal Justice Act, 1960, the Department of Justice placed women "On Remand" at the Sean McDermott Street Magdalene Laundry (also known as the Gloucester Street laundry) and paid a capitation grant for every woman so-referred. The Department possesses lists of these women.

The Department of Justice now acknowledges also that women were routinely referred to various Magdalene Asylums via the Irish court system, in an arrangement entered into by members of the judiciary and the four religious congregations operating Magdalene Laundries in the Irish State.

At the meeting, JFM also submitted archival evidence that women were placed in Magdalene Laundries "On Probation" by the Irish court system, in some cases for periods of up to 3 years.

The Department of Justice officials stated that there was no legal basis supporting the courts' use of these institutions to confine women and, likewise, that there was no legal basis for members of the Garda Síochána returning women who escaped from the laundry institutions.

JFM requested that the Minister for Justice now demonstrate conclusively what became of each woman referred to the Magdalene Laundries either by the Department of Justice directly or via the judicial system. Moreover, JFM asked that the Minister for Justice request from the four religious congregations all records related to these women.

In light of these revelations, Justice for Magdalenes demands a retraction of the Minister for Education's assertion that the "State did not refer individuals to Magdalene Laundries nor was it complicit in referring individuals to them" (4th September 2009).

At a later meeting on Monday afternoon, Mr. Ruairi Quinn, T.D., and Labour Party Spokesperson for Education and Science, informed JFM of his intention to table a series of Parliamentary Questions regarding this new information when the Dáil reconvenes in January 2010.

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) invites the Irish media to a Press Conference on Tuesday, 15 December at 11 a.m. at the Boston College-Ireland building, 42 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.

Justice for Magdalenes is engaged in a series of meetings on December 14/15 (see itinerary below), that it will discuss further at the Press Conference at 11 a.m. It will also preview the presentation it is scheduled to make at an *ad hoc* committee meeting chaired by Mr. Tom Kitt, T.D. (FF) in Dáil Éireann on Tuesday afternoon at 3 p.m.

For Further Information, please contact:

Claire McGettrick, JFM PRO: 086 1212674

Mari Steed, JFM Director of Coordinating Committee: (1) 215-589-9329

Messages/Media Requests for James M. Smith can be left at Boston College-Ireland: 01-614-7450

JFM Itinerary, December 14/15

- Officials from the Department of Justice, Monday afternoon
- Officials from the Department of Education, No Show
- **Mr. Ruairi Quinn**, T.D., Labour Party Spokesperson on Education, together with Ms. Katherine Dunne, Chairperson of Labour Women, Ms. Kirsi Hanifin, Women and Equality Officer, Monday
- Presentation before an *Ad Hoc* committee at Dáil Éireann, hosted by Mr. Tom Kitt, T.D., Fianna Fáil
- **Mr. Enda Kenny**, T.D., Leader of Fine Gael Party, Tuesday afternoon
- National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC), **Ms. Susan McKay** (Director), and Ms. Rachel Doyle (Outreach Officer), Tuesday evening

Speaking at the Press Conference/Media Preview will be Dr. James M. Smith, Associate Professor, English Department and Irish Studies Program, Boston College and Ms. Claire McGettrick, PRO for Justice for Magdalenes (JFM)

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