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## Magdalene lobby group criticises Coalition inaction

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KITTY HOLLAND

THE GOVERNMENT has failed to implement a key recommendation by the UN Committee Against Torture to set up an inquiry into the “inhuman and degrading” treatment of thousands of women and girls in the Magdalene laundries during the last century, a lobby group for the women has said.

The Justice for Magdalenes group submitted its NGO follow-up report in Geneva yesterday, one year after the UN committee recommended the State “institute prompt, independent and thorough investigations into all complaints of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment that were allegedly committed in the Magdalene laundries”.

In appropriate cases, the committee said, the State should “prosecute and punish the perpetrators with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offences committed, and ensure all victims obtain redress and have an enforceable right to compensation, including the means for as full a rehabilitation as possible”.

While the Justice for Magdalenes group welcomed the establishment of an interdepartmental committee, chaired by Senator Martin McAleese, to “clarify State interaction with the Magdalene Laundries”, it said this was inadequate and unnecessary.

James Smith, of the JFM committee, said there was “ample evidence of State involvement” with the laundries to warrant an apology and pensions to “this group of ageing . . . women”.

The group also submitted its report to Felice Gaer, director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights and vice-chairwoman of the UN Committee Against Torture.

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In Dublin yesterday she said international action to combat torture and ill-treatment could never be fully effective "until national protections, including strong monitoring mechanisms are in place and operational".

Tomorrow, another Magdalene survivors group will meet Mr McAleese to deliver survivor testimonies detailing State interaction with the church-run institutions.

Magdalene Survivors Together says it has submitted ledgers from a number of laundries in the Dublin area detailing State contracts with them.

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