

**For Immediate Release**  
**6<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

**Justice for Magdalenes calls on Galway City Council to reverse its decision regarding  
Magdalene memorial statue**

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM), an advocacy group for survivors of Ireland's Magdalene laundries, urges Galway City Council to reverse its decision to remove a statue memorialising the women who lived, worked and, in some cases, died at the Sisters of Mercy Magdalene laundry in the city. Dedicated in March 2009, the Mick Wilkins statue was commissioned by the same city councillors who now seek to remove it. It is located at the corner of Forster Street and Bothár Breandan O Eithir, standing in full public view close to where the laundry institution once stood.

Patricia Burke Brogan, author of the plays *Eclipsed* and *Stained Glass at Samhain*, was one of the prime advocates for a Galway memorial and has also advocated against removal of the statue. Her poetry adorns the plaque at the foot of the statue:

*Make visible the Tree  
its branches ragged  
with washed out linens  
of a bleached shroud*

JFM notes there is talk of relocating the statue, although the organisation is adamant that relocation should be appropriate – referencing the treatment meted out to the Padraic O'Conaire statue, formerly at Eyre Square – and is concerned that a similar fate not befall the Magdalene memorial. However, JFM believes the statue should remain as is and relocation should only be considered as a last resort.

Professor James Smith, an advisory committee member of JFM and author of *Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (2008), notes, "To borrow Patricia Burke Brogan's words, 'Mak[ing] visible' is precisely what the Galway Magdalene memorial is all about. We call on Galway's City Council to reverse its decision and leave the statue where its cultural resonance remains strongest—on the public thoroughfare, in full view of locals and visitors, near where the laundry itself stood. To do otherwise is to 'bleach' clean society's complicity in the abuses meted out to women and young girls in these institutions. Victims and survivors alike deserve better."

[ENDS]

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