

**Press Release 6th June 2012, 6.30pm– for immediate release**  
**Justice for Magdalenes helps organise survivor meeting with Senator McAleese**

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM), the survivor advocacy group is pleased to confirm that a group of Magdalene survivors in contact with the organisation met today with Senator Martin McAleese, Independent Chairperson of the *Inter-departmental Committee to “clarify state interaction with the Magdalene Laundries”*. JFM says that the meeting was a deliberately private event, in accordance with the wishes of the women and consistent with the organisation’s ethos to put the dignity and privacy of survivors first.

Katherine O’Donnell, Director of Women’s Studies at UCD’s School of Social Justice/JFM Advisory Committee said: “As the Magdalene Laundries system served to disempower and silence women, it is vital that survivors actively participate in the Inter-departmental Committee process. Apart from the vast level of valuable knowledge that survivors possess, it is also essential that those most affected are offered a voice at the table.”

Women travelled to Dublin from all over Ireland for today’s meeting. The survivors participating included daughters of two women incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries and now deceased. Both women said they wished to give their mothers a voice as well as highlighting the generational impact on families of the Magdalene Laundry system and the importance of end of life issues.

Last week JFM submitted its first tranche of testimonies amounting to 519 pages which included contributions from a number of the survivors meeting with Senator McAleese today. JFM says that the women’s testimony was collected with their full and informed consent, under ethical approval from UCD’s College of Human Sciences in accordance with the highest human-subject research standards.

Claire McGettrick, JFM PRO said: “In the testimonies already gathered, all survivors told us that they could not leave the laundries, that the doors were locked and the windows inaccessible. If they did try to leave they were returned by the Gardaí, while others decided not to try to escape because they knew the same fate awaited them. They all told us they could not complain, in most cases they remarked that there was nobody to complain to; while others begged to leave, often on a daily basis, but all were refused. Every single survivor confirmed that they were never paid, that no inspections were ever carried out and that no government official ever came to check on them.”

James M. Smith (Boston College and JFM Advisory Committee) said: “JFM welcomes the input of survivors into the Interdepartmental Committee investigation and while JFM will continue to cooperate with that process, we assert that there is ample evidence of state involvement with the Magdalene Laundries to warrant an immediate apology, pensions and restoring lost wages to this group of aging and elderly women. They need help now while still alive to benefit from it.”

JFM thanks Senator McAleese for agreeing to meet the women today, and thanks him once again for the time, respect and consideration he accorded them.

PLEASE NOTE: JFM did not issue an advance press release in keeping with our ethos to protect the dignity and privacy of survivors, so that they can choose when and how they wish to make their experiences known more publically.

[ENDS]

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