

Press Release, 10th February 2013, 7pm

Justice for Magdalenes clarification regarding Taoiseach meeting

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) seeks to clarify the circumstances surrounding a reported meeting between An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D., and Magdalene survivors.

JFM is a survivor advocacy group and does not “represent” any group of women who were incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries. Rather, JFM seeks to open the doors to justice for all survivors. JFM is however in close contact with a number of survivors who have from time to time asked us to advocate on their behalf, e.g., by organising meetings or submitting testimony to the Inter-Departmental Committee.

Since its foundation ten years ago, Justice for Magdalenes has had a survivor centred ethos at its core. In other words, survivors' interests must come first — even when it makes our job harder to do. We do not make decisions for survivors, instead, we believe in ensuring that they make their decisions in an informed way. JFM will in turn, always abide by survivors' wishes.

We at JFM have worked very hard to protect the dignity of survivors and their wish to keep out of the media glare. Most of these women remain in silence because the stigma remains — they have not been apologised to or told by our country's leaders that what happened to them was wrong.

In this context, when JFM was approached on Friday evening by an official from another department regarding a meeting with An Taoiseach. On the same day we wrote back to the official seeking written clarifications on a number of issues including: the purpose of the meeting, the format of the meeting, the agenda for the meeting, who will be present and most importantly, what guarantees can be given that the survivors will be protected from the media.

If a written communication is received from An Taoiseach's office clarifying the issues raised above, JFM will in turn contact survivors and allow them to make their own decision regarding a meeting. If survivors decide to attend, JFM will make itself available to facilitate this.

Please note: JFM has been in regular communication with survivors since the publication of the McAleese Report and all of the women have indicated that an apology and compensation are their highest priorities.

JFM reiterates its call on An Taoiseach Mr Enda Kenny TD to issue an immediate apology to all survivors of the Magdalene Laundries. We also reiterate our call on the government to establish a transparent and non-adversarial compensation process, that includes the provision of pensions, lost wages, health and housing services, as well as redress, and that is open to all survivors, putting their welfare at the forefront. Magdalene survivors have waited too long for justice and this should not be now burdened with either a complicated legal process or a closed-door policy of compensation.

JFM respects, absolutely, the right of other survivors and/or representative groups to accept the invitation to attend this meeting. We acknowledge and admire survivors who have spoken

publicly in recent days about their experiences in the Laundries. We ask, simply, that women who seek to protect their privacy are allowed to do so.

[ENDS]

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