

PRESS RELEASE 15 March 2012

Irish Human Rights Commission, Women's Human Rights Alliance and Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) address UN Human Rights Council on Magdalene Laundries abuse

The Irish Human Rights Commission has made a statement to the UN Human Rights Council calling on the government to address the issue of reparation for survivors of the Magdalene Laundries.

The Women's Human Rights Alliance (WHRA), led by the National Women's Council of Ireland, also made a statement to the Human Rights Council urging the government to comply with the recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture and Irish Human Rights Commission to institute a statutory inquiry and compensation scheme for the Magdalene Laundries abuse.

Last October, when Ireland presented for its Universal Periodic Review in Geneva, 127 recommendations were made by UN member states for Ireland to strengthen its human rights protections. Maeve O'Rourke, JFM advisory committee, said: "Justice for Magdalenes participated in this process by submitting evidence to the Human Rights Council of the State's involvement in the Magdalene Laundries abuse, including firsthand testimony from survivors."

Today, the government communicated its acceptance of a recommendation from Thailand to institute a statutory inquiry and compensation scheme for women and children abuse victims by explaining that an apology has already made to victims of childhood abuse and compensation awarded by the Residential Institutions Redress Board.

Speaking to the Human Rights Council,¹ Jacqueline Healy of WHRA said "We are gravely concerned that in accepting the Thai recommendation for a statutory inquiry and compensation scheme for women and children victims of abuse, there is no mention of the women survivors of Ireland's Magdalene Laundries who have been denied reparation."

Claire McGettrick of JFM said, "Thailand's recommendation specifically referred to 'women' victims. The government's response has elided the suffering of the women who spent time in Magdalene Laundries, who have so far been denied any apology or reparation. Magdalene Laundry survivors need to know that the government is serious about putting this injustice right and the government's statement to the UN Human Rights Council today did nothing to achieve that."

[ENDS]

Contact Details:

Claire McGettrick [PRO], Ireland—353-(0)86-3659516, clairemcgettrick@gmail.com

Mari Steed, Philadelphia—(00)1-215-589-9329, mari_tee@yahoo.com

James M. Smith, Galway —353-87-187-1654, smithbt@bc.edu

Maeve O'Rourke, London—(00) 44 74 0330 1781, maeveorourke@gmail.com

Katherine O'Donnell, Dublin—353-(0)1-716-7323,086-961-2163 katherine.odonnell@ucd.ie

¹ The Women's Human Rights Alliance includes: Irish Family Planning Association, Women's Aid, Banulacht, National Women's Council of Ireland, Open Parent Exchange and Network, Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Pavee Point, Cáirde, National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks, Justice for Magdalenes, Immigrant Council of Ireland, National Traveller Women's Forum, UN Women (Ireland).