

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**December 16<sup>th</sup> 2009**

## **All Party Dáil/Seanad Committee on Magdalenes Formed**

The survivor advocacy group Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) announces that members of the Dáil and Seanad are to form an *ad hoc* committee to address the issue of redress for those incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries.

Dr. James M Smith, Associate Professor at Boston College and member of JFM's advisory committee made a presentation to the members of the *ad hoc* committee yesterday at Dáil Éireann, which was hosted by Tom Kitt TD. The presentation consisted of a brief history of Ireland's Magdalene Laundries, including evidence that the Irish State was complicit in referring women to the Laundries.

Dr. Smith also presented JFM's proposed distinct Redress Scheme for the Magdalene Laundries and informed the committee of the outcome of JFM's meeting with Department of Justice officials who acknowledged that the Department placed women "On Remand" at the Sean McDermott Street Magdalene Laundry, that women were routinely referred to various Magdalene Asylums via the Irish court system and that there was no legal basis supporting the courts' use of these institutions to confine women or for members of the Garda Síochána returning women who escaped from the laundry institutions.

Justice for Magdalenes PRO, Claire McGettrick also attended the meeting and explained the impact on adopted people whose natural mothers were incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries. "It can come as a huge shock to adopted people who assume that their natural mothers went on to live a happy life, only to discover that they ended up in a Magdalene Laundry and in some cases were never released and are still living in the care of the nuns," she said.

The TD's and Senators in attendance all agreed that the issue of the Magdalene Laundries could not be ignored and have elected to come together as an all-party committee in order to address the matter and will call for a parliamentary debate on the issue in January. Dr. Smith said, "We welcome the formation of this committee, as it is time for the State to honour its commitment to 'cherish all the children of the nation equally' and children incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries must not be treated differently."

JFM also wishes to acknowledge the tabling of four Parliamentary Questions by Ruairi Quinn TD on its behalf.

TD's and Senators in attendance included: Tom Kitt (FF), Michael Kennedy (FF), David Norris (Ind), Maureen O'Sullivan (Ind), Cyprian Brady (FF), Sean Ardagh (FF), Fiona O'Malley (Ind), Chris Andrews (FF), Jim Walsh (FF), Emmett Stagg (Lab), Ivana Bacik (Lab), Kathleen Lynch (Lab), Joe Costello (Lab), Mary Wallace (FF) and Noel Treacy (FF). – Representatives were also present from Ulick Burke (FG), Alan Shatter (FG) and Caoimhin O'Caolain (SF).

Contact: Claire McGettrick, 353-(0)86-1212674, [clairemcgettrick@gmail.com](mailto:clairemcgettrick@gmail.com)  
Mari Steed, 1-215-589-9329, [mari\\_tee@yahoo.com](mailto:mari_tee@yahoo.com)  
James Smith, 1-617-552-1596, [smithbt@bc.edu](mailto:smithbt@bc.edu)  
[www.magdalenelaundries.com](http://www.magdalenelaundries.com)