

PRESS RELEASE—For Immediate Release, 22-04-2011

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) makes submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM), the survivor advocacy group, has made a formal submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture. The Committee Against Torture is due to examine Ireland for the first time on the extent to which it is meeting its human rights obligations to prevent torture, other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment on 23rd and 24th May 2011.

JFM's submission draws attention to Ireland's legal duties under the Convention Against Torture to promptly and impartially investigate allegations of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and to ensure redress for the victims of such treatment.

Maeve O'Rourke (Harvard LL.M.), author of JFM's submission and Harvard Law School 2010 Global Human Rights Fellow, said: "The Irish government will be given the opportunity to respond to the issues raised by civil society organisations such as JFM in its dialogue with the UN Committee against Torture. This international process offers the chance for Ireland to show the world that it is serious about putting right the mistakes of its past and ensuring a better and more equal future for all, including those who were so unjustly treated by the State in decades gone by."

The submission highlights the continuing degrading treatment that the women who spent time in Magdalene Laundries are suffering today because of the government's ongoing failure to apologise, investigate and compensate for the abuse.

For almost two years JFM has worked with various government departments advocating for survivors' needs. The women do not receive a pension for the compulsory yet unpaid work they were forced to endure. They do not receive healthcare or education to assist them in overcoming the physical and psychological effects of abuse suffered in the laundries. There is a dearth of personal records. The women continue to feel constrained and silenced by a deep sense of stigma and shame. Church and State, both, need to acknowledge that these survivors of institutional abuse were not at fault, but instead had a grave injustice perpetrated upon them.

Councillor Sally Mulready, Chair of the Irish Women's Support Network, London, and Member of JFM's Advisory Committee, states, "The women were deprived of their liberty, and forced into a form of penal and religious servitude. Compelled to work in the harshest of conditions, they never knew if they would ever again see the outside world again."

Professor James Smith (Boston College), Member of JFM's Advisory Committee, added, "we have waited nearly six months for the government's response to the Irish Human Rights Commission's unambiguous recommendation to initiate a statutory inquiry on this issue. We also recently submitted a revised "Restorative Justice and Reparations Scheme" and offered to meet with the Minister for Justice to discuss a pathway forward. Simply put, some of these women may not have another six months to wait. The time for action is now!"

JFM also recently made a submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review, as part of the Twelfth Session of the Working Group on the UPR Human Rights Council due in October 2011.

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Notes to Editor:

For the full submission:

http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/jfm_comm_on_torture_210411.pdf

For further information on JFM:

<http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/what.htm>