

PRESS RELEASE
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Justice for Magdalenes Submits Human Rights Application

Survivor advocacy group Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) today met with the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and Amnesty International Ireland.

JFM applied to the IHRC to conduct a formal enquiry into the State's obligation to apologise to and provide redress for survivors of the laundries. The IHRC welcomed the submission and agreed to examine the arguments involved as soon as possible, given the time-sensitive nature of the issues for many survivors.

JFM decided to seek assistance from the IHRC following the government's repeated attempts to deny culpability for the issue.

The JFM request for an IHRC enquiry argues that:

- (i) The fact that the laundries were private institutions does not absolve the State of responsibility to protect the women and girls from abuse endured at the hands of the religious orders.
- (ii) The State knew of the nature and function of the Magdalene laundries.
- (iii) Just as the State held a duty to protect children in State residential institutions, it held a duty to protect *all* the women and girls in the laundries.
- (iv) The State referred certain women and young girls to the laundries.
- (v) The State had a Constitutional duty to educate *all* children and to care for children in cases of parental failure.
- (vi) The abuse suffered by women and children in the Magdalene laundries, whether they entered privately or at the hands of the State, amounts to slavery and/or forced and compulsory labour, and the State was obligated at the time of the abuse to abolish slavery and forced labour under international law, international labour law, European human rights law and possibly Irish constitutional law.

Article 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights provides for the right to an effective remedy for violations of Convention rights and freedoms. The ongoing failure of the State to provide a remedy to victims of abuse in the Magdalene laundries is a violation of this right.

In addition to meeting the IHRC, JFM today met with Colm O'Gorman, Director of Amnesty International Ireland. Both groups will continue to work towards the twin objectives of an apology and a distinct redress scheme. JFM also met with Kathleen Lynch TD (Lab) and members of the Labour Women national executive to discuss the campaign.

[ENDS]

View photos from this event at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/45626669@N04/sets/72157624216592371/>

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