

Press Release: 30 November, 2009

Justice for Magdalenes outraged at grave disrespect

Justice for Magdalenes, the organisation that campaigns for the rights of women incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries, has written to Glasnevin cemetery and the Lord Mayor of Dublin demanding the removal of the storage area that has been erected around the Mecklenburg Street Magdalene grave at Glasnevin Cemetery. The organisation has also written to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, who have responsibility for the grave.

Claire McGettrick, Justice for Magdalenes PRO, made the discovery while bringing a group of film students making a documentary about the Laundries to the Magdalene graves in the cemetery. She said, "I was horrified when we arrived at the Mecklenburg Street grave, to see that it had been reduced to a storage area. This grave is of particular importance to us as the women are referred to as 'penitents' and this is one of the many Magdalene graves where none of the women's names are on the gravestone. Now, with the careless erection of this storage area, they are subjected to even further disrespect."

Justice for Magdalenes says it is highly unlikely that a construction firm would erect a similar storage area around the graves of the social and politically prominent. But because these were Magdalene women Irish society again feels empowered to treat them with impunity.

Professor James Smith, author of *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment*, said, "These women were treated with little dignity in life and now they are afforded no dignity in death. Using the sacred space of the gravesite as a construction site storage facility signals the complete disregard for these women's rights and nobody should have their memory disregarded in this manner."

Justice for Magdalenes asserts that this type of mistreatment is completely unacceptable. What has happened at Glasnevin Cemetery demonstrates the tendency to forget and disregard Magdalene women, like the Irish government has disregarded them by refusing to set up a Redress Scheme to compensate them for the abuse they endured.

In July of this year, Justice for Magdalenes submitted a draft [Magdalene Redress Scheme](#) to the Irish government (which has yet to be acknowledged). One of the clauses in the Scheme states: "*The State will fund the upkeep and maintenance of Magdalen burial plots, and will work with the religious orders to erect suitable memorial stones, as well as to ensure the complete accuracy of such memorials. The State will amend language on burial memorial stones which refer to the Magdalens as 'penitents,' 'residents,' 'sinners,' etc.*"

Justice for Magdalenes again calls on the Irish State to implement a Magdalene Redress Scheme to ensure that these Irish citizens are protected in death and secure for them the basic human dignity they were denied while alive.

Photos of the grave, before and after are available online at <http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/mecklenburgh.htm> and can be obtained by emailing info@magdalenelaundries.com.

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Justice for Magdalenes seeks to promote and represent the interests of the Magdalene Women, to respectfully promote equality and seek justice for the women formerly incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries and to seek the establishment / improvements of support/advisory/re-integration services provided for survivors.