

JFM demands immediate government action for Magdalene survivors

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM), the survivor advocacy group, is this week providing every TD and Senator with a redacted copy of its recent principal submission to the Inter-Departmental Committee investigating State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries. We do so with survivors' consent and identities have been protected.

"State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries," a 145-page document with an additional 30-page index of supporting materials, offers overwhelming and irrefutable evidence of State complicity in the abuses experienced by young girls and women in these institutions. The original submission was supported by some 795 pages of newly gathered survivor testimony which is consistent with the 3,707 pages of archival evidence and legislative documentation also provided to the Inter-Departmental Committee.

JFM's decision to make the redacted document available comes in light of the announcement last week by Minister for Justice, Mr. Alan Shatter, T.D., that the Inter-Departmental Committee's final report now may not appear until the end of the year. Originally, the final report was to be published by "mid-2012," and then no later than this month.

As stated in our press release last week, JFM is gravely concerned by this additional delay and calls on the government to issue an immediate apology and to initiate meaningful discussions towards providing redress and restorative justice to all survivors. The UN Committee Against Torture recommendation (June 2011) called on the State to ensure that survivors obtain redress within one year. The State has failed to do so. Meanwhile a population of aging and elderly women is left waiting.

Moreover, Minister Shatter has refused to discuss an apology or redress until after the publication of the Committee's final report. JFM has, in turn, repeatedly asked Mr. Shatter to set a threshold for State involvement short of the final report so that survivors can access entitlements without further delay, e.g., statutory pensions and lost wages.

JFM is urging all Oireachtas members to read "State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries" and to press Minister Shatter to take action within the Dáil's Autumn session. Survivors' entitlements should no longer be held hostage to a political system that is not delivering on its promises.

JFM has also written to Minister for State with responsibility for older people, Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D. In our letter, we refer Minister for State Lynch to JFM's proposed Restorative Justice and Reparations Scheme, submitted on 14th October 2011, which outlined a Dedicated Unit within the Department of Justice to provide services for Magdalene survivors. Given the ongoing delays to real Government action, JFM is asking Minister Lynch to make available a dedicated help line and outreach service to Laundry survivors as soon as possible.

Three years into this campaign, 22 months after the IHRC recommendation, 15 months after the United Nation's Committee Against Torture recommendation and ensuing Government Statement on the Magdalene Laundries, by refusing to apologise and provide redress, the Fine Gael and Labour government continues to fail survivors of the Magdalene Laundries. Will the all too familiar policy of "deny 'til they die" become "delay 'til they die"?

[ENDS]

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Notes to editors:

JFM Summary of State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries:

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

JFM Press Release, 12th September 2012:

<http://magdalenelaundries.com/press/JFM%20PR%2011-09-12.pdf>

Minister Shatter's Press Release regarding delay in Inter-Departmental Committee Report:

<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR12000249>

JFM website:

www.magdalenelaundries.com

JFM Follow-up report to United Nations Committee Against Torture:

http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/JFM_UNCAT_Follow%20Up_Complete.pdf

Interim Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee:

<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/MagdelanInterimReport2011Oct.pdf/Files/MagdelanInterimReport2011Oct.pdf>