

Justice for Magdalenes Research Press Release

Presentation to UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Monday 8 June 2015

Justice for Magdalenes Research today told the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that the Irish State is refusing to provide the full healthcare package to Magdalene women that it promised in 2013.

Following an apology by An Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny for the Irish State's involvement with the punitive Magdalene institutions the Irish government established an *ex gratia* scheme to Magdalene survivors and so far over 500 have applied provide financial support, healthcare and other measures to survivors, in exchange for their agreement not to sue the State.

The government prioritised the administration of money payments, meanwhile delaying the healthcare and other elements of the scheme.

In order to receive financial compensation, the women are required to waive all of their legal rights against the State. Therefore, they are disempowered to insist that the rest of the Scheme is implemented properly.

The Irish government now refuses to provide some of the healthcare services it promised in 2013, including counselling for immediate family members.

There is still no healthcare for women outside Ireland who have entered the scheme.

Further un-implemented aspects of the scheme include support and advocacy services, and assistance in obtaining education and housing.

(1) Today, JFMR has asked the Committee to recommend that the government immediately implements the scheme in full.

(2) Secondly, JFMR has asked the Committee to recommend an independent, thorough investigation into the Magdalene Laundries abuse.

The UN Human Rights Committee and Committee against Torture have repeatedly requested this investigation. But the government refuses, citing an 'absence of any credible evidence of systematic torture or criminal abuse being committed in the Magdalen Laundries'.ⁱ The government says women were not held against their will for long periods.ⁱⁱ This is not true; please see JFM Research's carefully referenced report, pages 8-11.ⁱⁱⁱ

The government claims it has already investigated the abuse. It has not.

The government pursued an internal, inter-departmental inquiry into State interaction with the institutions. There were no terms of reference to investigate abuse, no findings regarding abuse and no authority held responsible for abuse. Now, the government claims no systematic abuse worth investigating occurred. Hundreds of women who died and their burial places remain unidentified.^{iv}

JFMR asks the Irish state to give dignity to these women in the present, so as not to repeat the past.

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ⁱ Letter from Gerard Corr, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations Office at Geneva to Ms Felice D Gaer, Rapporteur, United Nations Committee against Torture (8 August 2013),

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/IRL/CAT_C_IRL_CO_1_Add-2_14838_E.pdf, p 7

ⁱⁱ See Replies of Ireland to the list of issues of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, UN Doc CCPR/C/IRL/Q/4/Add.1 (5 May 2014), para 54

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2fIRL%2fQ%2f4%2fAdd.1&Lang=en

ⁱⁱⁱ Justice for Magdalenes Research, Parallel Report to UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2015

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fCSS%2fIRL%2f20181&Lang=en

^{iv} Justice for Magdalenes Research, 'Death, Institutionalisation & Duration of Stay: A Critique of Chapter 16 of the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries and related issues, http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/JFMR_Critique_190215.pdf