

11 February, 2011

Statement by Oireachtas Ad Hoc Committee on the Magdalene Laundries

Since its formation in December 2009, an all-party group of TDs and Senators has met occasionally to consider State complicity in Ireland's Magdalene Laundries. In particular, the *Ad Hoc* committee is troubled by evidence of direct state involvement in the placement and detention of women and young girls in laundries managed by various religious congregations between the 1920s and the 1980s.

The Ad Hoc Committee is firmly of the view that the Irish Human Rights Commission's assessment of evidence submitted by Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) is most compelling. The assessment was published on Nov. 11, 2010, and was referred to the Attorney General's office by the outgoing government. No further action has been taken.

We believe the IHRC assessment deserves an immediate response from the incoming Government. We support the IHRC's recommendation that the State immediately establish a statutory inquiry into human rights violations in these laundries.

The State must clarify its historic involvement in the placement and detention of Irish citizens in secure institutions that they were not free to leave. The evidence presented to us suggests substantial numbers of women and girls were detained against their will and compelled to work in commercial laundries without pay. In numerous incidences the detentions appear to have taken place without due legal process in a court of law.

In view of the age and fragility of the Women concerned we would hope that the matter would receive significant priority and the immediate attention of the new Government.

Tom Kitt (T.D.) Michael Kennedy (T.D.) Kathleen Lynch (T.D.)

ENDS