

Press Release 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014

## **JFM Research welcomes UN Report on the Holy Sea; calls for immediate State action on Magdalene Laundries restorative justice scheme**

JFM Research welcomes the UN Report on the Holy See and points out that the Catholic church and the four religious orders that ran Magdalene Laundries in Ireland (Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Mercy, Good Shepherd Sisters, Sisters of our Lady of Charity) HAVE refused to accept unanimous survivor testimony that they were imprisoned and subjected to forced labour and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. None of the orders have offered an apology to Magdalene survivors, nor have they contributed to the compensation fund. The Catholic Church has not made any attempt to instigate an internal investigation into Magdalene abuse, nor has it held anyone accountable for what happened. Moreover, the State has allowed the church to continue to operate in secrecy, with the religious orders insisting that records submitted to the McAleese Committee should be returned and copies destroyed.

We also point out that one year after the publication of the McAleese Report and Taoiseach Kenny's official State apology, survivors have still not "obtained" the Redress called for by the UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) in 2011. Time is of the essence for this population of aging and elderly women and it is unacceptable that they continue to encounter denial, delay and obfuscation in their pursuit of justice.

The Irish government recently sent "final offer" letters to some survivors, detailing lump-sum compensation payments and including the legal waiver whereby women surrender "any right of action against the State or any public or statutory body or agency" arising out of their time in a Magdalene Laundry. All other elements of the restorative justice scheme—pensions, health care, housing assistance, a help line, a dedicated unit to coordinate additional services and an appropriate memorial—are dependent on legislation and governmental discussions. To date, there is no definitive timeline as to when such legislation will be passed?

The published "Terms" of the restorative justice scheme, moreover, do not adequately reflect Mr. Justice John Quirke's recommendations, which the government accepted "in full" on 23 June 2013. The provision of health care benefits, for example, is limited to survivors living "in the State" thereby discriminating against survivors in the Irish diaspora abroad.

JFM Research is gravely concerned by these unacceptable additional delays. We are aware of three survivors who have died and two others who have experienced repeated hospitalisations since the Taoiseach's apology last year.

Lastly, JFM Research supports its sister organisation, Adoption Rights Alliance in its campaign to highlight church and state abuses in Ireland's closed, secret forced adoption system.

### **Contact details:**

Claire McGettrick, Ireland—353-(0)86-3659516, [clairemcgettrick@gmail.com](mailto:clairemcgettrick@gmail.com)

Mari Steed, Philadelphia—(00)1-215-589-9329, [maristeed@gmail.com](mailto:maristeed@gmail.com)

Katherine O'Donnell, Dublin—353-(0)1-716-7323, 087-961-2163 [katherine.odonnell@ucd.ie](mailto:katherine.odonnell@ucd.ie)

James M. Smith, Boston College—(00)1-617-552-1596, [james.smith.2@bc.edu](mailto:james.smith.2@bc.edu)

Maeve O'Rourke, London – 00-44-7403301781, [maeveorourke@gmail.com](mailto:maeveorourke@gmail.com)