

**Press Release: 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013 12am**  
**JUSTICE FOR MAGDALENES TO END ITS POLITICAL CAMPAIGN**

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Justice for Magdalenes (JFM), the survivor advocacy group, is announcing the end of its political campaign, begun in June 2009.

As outlined in JFM's "Public Notice" on the group's website, the political campaign had twin objectives, namely:

- (i) to bring about an official apology from the Irish State, and
- (ii) the establishment of a compensation scheme for all Magdalene survivors.

And, as the "Public Notice" explains, "[o]nce JFM achieves these objectives, the door will be open to every survivor and/or her family members and/or other groups representing Magdalene survivors to pursue their own claim for redress."

As a voluntary group, and having worked at maximum capacity over the past four years, JFM believes it has achieved all that it can by way of political advocacy. The responsibility to ensure that justice is delivered to survivors of the Laundries now rests with all members of Irish society, including Church, State, families and local communities. It is the collective responsibility of all citizens to ensure that the promise of An Taoiseach's official State apology (19<sup>th</sup> February 2013) is delivered upon.

JFM has contacted all of the survivors and relatives with whom we have been in regular contact over the past number of years to inform them of our withdrawal from the political arena. **We will continue to assist these survivors and relatives in our personal capacities** as they engage with the Magdalen Commission. It has been our great privilege to earn the women's trust and we will always feel indebted to them for sharing their life stories with us.

**JFM has taken the following steps in recent months to prepare for the group's withdrawal from the political arena:**

JFM has **published a number of questions and concerns in relation to the Magdalen Fund/Commission** ([http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/JFM\\_Questions\\_and\\_Concerns.pdf](http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/JFM_Questions_and_Concerns.pdf) and below) that remain unanswered. Mr Justice Quirke is due to report to Government the criteria by which the Fund will operate in the coming weeks. We have circulated these questions to members of the Oireachtas and enclose them below to **ask for continued vigilance from the media and public in relation to ensuring justice for Magdalene women.**

We have also done the following:

In March 2013, **JFM published two self-help guides**, one for survivors and one for family members. The Guides are available at the JFM website:

<http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/Survivor%20Guide%20to%20Magdalen%20Commission.pdf>  
<http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/Relatives%20Guide%20to%20Magdalen%20Commission.pdf>

We have widely circulated both Guides to TDs, Senators, Magdalene representative groups, the Church Hierarchy and Religious Orders, NGOs, Family Resource Centres, and Irish Immigrant Centres world-wide.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013, JFM made a **submission to the UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT)** requesting that the Committee “monitor the design and implementation of the forthcoming Magdalene Laundries reparations process and [...] make recommendations to, and engage in dialogue with, the Irish government as it deems appropriate.” By doing so, we anticipate that UNCAT will continue to focus its attention on the State’s fulfilment of its obligation under the UN Convention against Torture to ensure that Magdalene survivors obtain adequate reparation. We also expect that the government’s “Scheme” will be considered in detail when Ireland is next examined by the UN Human Rights Committee in July 2014 and again by UNCAT in 2016.

We are currently in correspondence with NGOs, academics, trade unionists and the Irish Human Rights Commission to ensure that there is appropriate follow-up on the Human Rights issues raised in this campaign.

**JFM’s information phone line will continue to operate a referral service but now with an automated message directing callers to resources** which are already available, including [National Counselling, Family Resource, FLAC, etc.]. This information is also available on JFM’s website.

JFM has made available an **income and expenditure statement** for the period since June 2009 at ([http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/JFM\\_inc\\_exp\\_statement\\_May\\_2013.pdf](http://www.magdalenelaundries.com/JFM_inc_exp_statement_May_2013.pdf)). JFM has always tried to operate in a transparent manner, especially in terms of its finances. While our group never applied for nor received funding from State or Church sources, our work did benefit from a number of timely awards and donations, particularly from the Ireland Fund of Great Britain and the *Feminist Review* Trust. We dedicated much of these funds to the effort of collecting and transcribing survivor testimony as part of our principal submission to the Inter-Departmental Committee.

JFM’s **website will continue to be available** as a source of information for survivors, relatives, researchers and all others with an interest in the history of Ireland’s Magdalene institutions and the campaign for justice. JFM will also continue to operate its Facebook page for the foreseeable future.

### **JFM’s continuing projects**

While withdrawing from the political advocacy arena, JFM will continue to engage in issues of transitional justice, including a suitable national memorial, upkeep of Magdalene graves, educational and curricular initiatives and the completion of the Names Project. All materials related to the JFM political campaign will be archived and publicly available as part of the [Magdalene Institutions: Archival and Oral History Project](#) operated by the Women’s Studies Centre in the School of Social Justice at University College Dublin and funded by the Irish Research Council. JFM will continue to support this project and encourages all survivors, family members, religious orders and other witnesses to do likewise.

### **Thank you**

In withdrawing from the political advocacy arena, JFM takes this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped the group accomplish its goals. Our campaign was truly a collaborative effort.

First and foremost, we thank the survivors and family members who have guided our campaign and enriched each of our lives on a deeply personal level.

We thank our wider past and present advisory committee, who made invaluable contributions throughout our campaign.

We thank the citizens of Ireland and other nations who have supported the cause throughout this process.

We thank the individuals who have taken time out of their lives to assist the cause, including Raymond Hill, who went over and above the call of duty in his pro-bono assistance, Aoife, who has run our Information Line during this busy time, “F” (who wishes to remain anonymous), who assisted us in ensuring that the women buried behind 12 foot walls and locked gates at Sunday’s Well in Cork are remembered, members of PILA (a project of FLAC) and the 2,235 members of our Facebook group.

We thank all politicians, past and present, who advocated on our behalf. In particular, we thank those who engaged with the Oireachtas “All-Party” *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Magdalene Laundries, which proved instrumental in helping the cause for justice gain traction within Leinster House.

Likewise, we thank the NGO community for their support and assistance, and in particular we acknowledge the efforts of the NWCI, ICCL and Amnesty International-Ireland for their support, advice and direction in pursuing the International Human Rights aspects of JFM’s campaign. Likewise, we acknowledge as instrumental the role played by the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) and UNCAT in affirming survivors’ right to justice and redress.

The JFM group also thanks the media in Ireland and abroad for the interest they have taken in this story. Their coverage of this campaign helped generate important political leverage at key moments over the past four years. Thank you!

Last but not least, as individuals we thank our partners and family members who have shown great patience to us in the course of this campaign.

It has not been possible to name all of those who have assisted us, however JFM will be proud to publish a Roll of Honour on our website in due course.

**Contact Details:**

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

Mari Steed, Philadelphia—(00)1-215-589-9329, [mari\\_tee@yahoo.com](mailto:mari_tee@yahoo.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 — [maeveorourke@gmail.com](mailto:maeveorourke@gmail.com)

## Questions and concerns regarding the Magdalen Fund/Commission

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1. Does the government intend to advertise the existence of the Magdalen Fund/Commission, as well as the requirement that women register with the Commission, in media outlets at home and abroad? Given the lessons learned from the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB), where applicants living abroad came forward after the deadline claiming that they were never informed about the Scheme, will the Government commit to placing advertisements in national and local newspapers in Ireland as well as Irish Diaspora newspapers in the UK, US, Canada and Australia so that those not affiliated to groups have an equal chance to gain entitlements as survivors of abuse in the Magdalen Laundries? In this year of "The Gathering," will the government do everything in its power to reach out to survivors living abroad and empower them to avail of the Magdalen Fund?
2. What are the consequences of a survivor not registering with the Magdalen Fund/Commission during the three months of Mr Justice Quirke's review? Will she be excluded from further engaging with the process?
3. Will the Magdalen Fund/Commission be placed on a statutory footing with independent statutory powers?
4. What measures are being taken to ensure that the Magdalen Fund/Commission is a transparent process?
5. Will the Magdalen Fund/Commission have an appeals process?
6. Will there be independent monitoring of the Magdalen Fund/Commission?
7. Will the government make available to survivors and their families free independent advice and advocacy assistance in relation to this scheme?
8. Will Mr Justice Quirke be commissioned to implement the process that he recommends after the three month review period?
9. Will the government establish a dedicated helpline for Magdalene survivors?
10. What measures are being put in place to enable women in institutionalised settings to engage with the Magdalen Fund/Commission? Will a *guardian ad litem* or independent advocate be provided in all such cases as a way to further guarantee their rights?
11. Given that a 2010 HIQA inspection of one such setting found that "some institutional practices were observed which require to be reviewed, these include empowering residents to make decisions and choices in their daily lives, reviewing forms of address used and ensuring the confidentiality of residents' information", what plans are in place to ensure permanent advocacy for women in institutionalised settings in their places of residence?

Source: HIQA Reports:

<http://www.hiqa.ie/social-care/find-a-centre/nursing-homes/beechlawn-house-nursing-home>

12. Will the Department of Justice put in place measures to assist family members of deceased Magdalene women in engaging with the process?
13. What steps are being taken to ensure that Magdalene grave records are accurate and up to date?
14. What steps are being taken to ensure that there is access to Magdalene graves?
15. What steps are being taken to ensure the upkeep of Magdalene graves?
16. Will the Department of Justice ensure that copies of the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee are provided to survivors with no internet access, including survivors who provided testimony to the Committee but are yet to receive the Report?