

Press Release:

Strict embargo: 7 a.m. Tuesday March 6th 2018

GOVERNMENT CALLED ON TO HELP HONOUR HUNDREDS OF MAGDALENE SURVIVORS

**Special two-day event for Magdalene survivors announced for Dublin in June
& businesswoman Norah Casey as Ambassador**

#HonourMagdalenes

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) today (Tuesday March 6th) called on the government to honour two of the key [recommendations](#) of the Magdalene Redress Scheme by helping bring survivors together for a special 'Dublin Honours Magdalenes' event in June.

The two-day gathering on June 5th and 6th, at which several hundred survivors of the Magdalene Laundries will be honoured and celebrated by the City of Dublin, will fulfil two of the key recommendations of Mr Justice Quirke's Magdalene Redress Scheme - that the women be supported to meet and get to know each other, and that they discuss how they would like their experiences to be officially remembered. **See notes below*

In 2013 the McAleese Report to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries found that well over 10,000 girls and women spent time in Magdalene Laundries. It found that the State was involved in imprisoning more than 25% of the girls and women and that it funded and held laundry service contracts with the institutions relying on forced unpaid labour.

The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mícheál MacDonncha, last night (Monday) announced at a meeting of Dublin City Council that he will host the women at the Mansion House on June 5th and 6th and that the Council's Central Area Committee has agreed to contribute towards the cost of the two-day event.

Welcoming the City Council move and announcing well-known businesswoman and publisher Norah Casey as an Ambassador for the event, Justice for Magdalenes Research today expressed its deep disappointment at the failure of the government to date to agree to contact the survivors on their behalf. The Department of Justice is the only body that holds the details of the estimated 800 hundred living survivors.

Katherine O'Donnell of JFMR said today: **'The Department of Justice is the only organisation which has the details of the women, but to date they have ignored our pleas to help bring them together by contacting them on our behalf.'**

'Time is of the essence here as these women are getting older. In his redress [report](#) in 2013 Mr Justice Quirke recommended that a gathering takes place before more of the women die. We are simply asking the Department, which holds all of the contact details, to invite them on our behalf. We are not asking them to hand over their contact details to us directly. When these women were in Magdalenes their names were changed and they weren't allowed to speak to each other. Bringing them together for the first time is a major step forward in redress for the huge wrong that was done to them.'

Maeve O'Rourke of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, and voluntary member of JFMR said: **'These women don't have any more time to wait. One of the reasons for this important gathering in June is for the women to start a conversation on memorialising what was a dark chapter in Irish history and in their lives. In his State apology to the women in 2013, former Taoiseach Enda Kenny promised that the government would establish a memorial following discussions with the women, but this hasn't happened yet five years later. Dublin City Council was planning to sell the last Magdalene building in State ownership, but last year Dublin City Councillors voted to consult with the women before that happens.'**

Dublin Lord Mayor Mícheál MacDonncha, said today: **'The City Council is delighted to support this very important gathering of brave women who have suffered so much already.'**

Ambassador for the event, well known businesswoman and publisher Norah Casey, said: **'Hundreds of Magdalene women suffered hugely at the hands of the State over many years. They have been through a long and painful journey in their efforts to find redress. The sad reality is that they are now getting older and many of them have already died without full closure for what happened to them.'**

'We are very grateful to Dublin City Council for agreeing to host this event but it needs lots of further support. In practical terms we need to fund two nights for the estimated 200 women who will attend. That involves hotel accommodation, a dinner with entertainment on the night of the 5th June, and time and space for the women to talk and discuss how they would like to be commemorated on the 6th.'

Ms Casey and the Justice for Magdalenes Research Group are appealing to Irish people, the entertainment industry and the corporate sector to come on board and help make 'Dublin Honours Magdalenes' happen for the women.

Members of the public are asked to contact their government TDs to request that the government immediately agrees to invite the women and agrees to help fund the event.

Benefit-in-kind support from the business community is welcome. The organisers can be contacted at dublinhonoursmagdalenes@gmail.com.

For more information please visit www.jfmresearch.com, @dublinhonoursmagdalenes on Facebook, or email dublinhonoursmagdalenes@gmail.com

#HonourMagdalenes

Website: www.jfmresearch.com

Email: dublinhonoursmagdalenes@gmail.com

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NOTES FOR JOURNALISTS

Timeline of events:

5 February 2013: Publication of the Report of the Inter-departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries (aka the 'McAleese Report'). The report estimates that well over 10,000 girls and women spent time in Magdalene Laundries, that the State was involved in imprisoning more than 25% of the girls and women and funded and held laundry service contracts with the institutions which they acknowledged, even at the time, relied on forced unpaid labour.

19 February 2013: Taoiseach Enda Kenny issues a State apology to Magdalene survivors and announces that Judge John Quirke (President of the Law Reform Commission) to develop recommendations for a restorative justice scheme. In his apology, Taoiseach Enda Kenny stated:

I am also conscious that many of the women I met last week want to see a permanent memorial established to remind us all of this dark part of our history. I agree that this should be done and intend to engage directly with the representative groups and of as many of the women as possible to agree on the creation of an appropriate memorial to be financed by the Government separately from the funds that are being set aside for the direct assistance for the women.

23 June 2013: Government announces it 'has decided to accept all recommendations in Judge Quirke's report'. Judge Quirke recommends that the restorative justice scheme should include:

- practical assistance to meet and interact with other Magdalen women; and
- the acquisition, maintenance and administration of any garden, museum or other form of memorial which the Scheme's administrator, after consultation with an advisory body or committee of Magdalene survivors, decides to construct or establish.

16 February 2017: Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) complains to the Ombudsman that the Magdalene restorative justice scheme has not been implemented as promised.

6 March 2017: Following the announcement of Dublin City Council's plan to sell the Sean McDermott Street Magdalene convent, Dublin City Councillors agree an Emergency Motion as follows:

The elected members of Dublin City Council note with concern that the site of the former Magdalene Laundry on Sean McDermott Street has been advertised as 'For Sale' to private development without the

implementation of Justice Quirke's accepted recommendation that a memorial be placed at the site which would 'honour and commemorate the Magdalen women past and present'.

Accordingly, the elected members of this City Council request that Dublin City Council commits to convening and consulting with a committee of Magdalene survivors with a view to establishing a memorial at the site of the council owned Sean McDermott Street convent, as recommended by the Quirke Commission and promised by the Government as part of the Magdalene restorative justice scheme.

- 10 April 2017: Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) writes to Tánaiste and Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald requesting assistance from the Department of Justice to organise a meeting of the Magdalene survivors and a consultation on memorialisation.
- 9 May 2017: JFMR writes to Taoiseach Enda Kenny requesting his assistance in organising a meeting of the Magdalene survivors and a consultation on memorialisation.
- 23 November 2017: Ombudsman issues report, 'Opportunity Lost', finding that the Department of Justice has 'maladministered' the Magdalene restorative justice scheme. He concludes that 'a scheme intended to bring healing and reconciliation has, for some, served instead to cause further distress'.
- 11 January 2018: JFMR writes to Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan requesting his Department's assistance in arranging a meeting and consultation of Magdalene survivors.
- 16 February 2018: JFMR writes to Taoiseach Leo Varadkar requesting his intervention to ensure that the Magdalene restorative justice scheme is implemented as promised, including through a meeting of Magdalene survivors and consultation on memorialisation.