

Press Release:

Friday March 9th 2018

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE'S OFFER TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT EVENT TO HONOUR MAGDALENE SURVIVORS IS WARMLY WELCOMED

Minister for Justice marks International Women's Day by confirming that he will invite women to Dublin event on behalf of JFMR

#HonourMagdalenes

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) today (Friday March 9th) warmly welcomed Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan's communication that he will facilitate their plans to honour survivors of the Magdalene Laundries at a 2 day event in Dublin this June.

Because the department is the only organisation with details of those who spent time in the laundries, JFMR had appealed to the Minister on Tuesday, asking that he would invite the survivors on their behalf, and also that he would lend his support to the event. Yesterday evening, marking International Women's Day, he confirmed that he would do so.

Speaking of the development Katherine O'Donnell of JFMR said: **'The Minister has said that he will send our invitations to everyone we ask him to, and he has also promised meaningful support for the event. This is a very important breakthrough which we are delighted with. The gathering, which was being organised by JFMR with the key support of Norah Casey as Business Ambassador, is a long awaited response to 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. It is wonderful, that having taken the initiative to hold the event, originally with backing from the Lord Mayor and Dublin City Councillors, we can rest assured that the Magdalene women will be contacted discreetly by the Minister. We will now concentrate on making this an historic celebration of resilience, warmth and compassion, qualities which have been shown in abundance by those who have spent time in Magdalene Laundries. We look forward to meeting with the Minister in the next two weeks to discuss the details of how we will cooperate'**.

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, on 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.

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

#HonourMagdalenes

Website: www.jfmresearch.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.

8th March, 2018: International Women's Day: Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan contacts JFMR to confirm that he will invite Magdalene Survivors to the event on behalf of JFMR and that he will also support it in a meaningful way.