

## **PRESS RELEASE: EMBARGOED UNTIL 2PM MONDAY 19 JANUARY**

### **Advocacy and rights groups join in criticising government's Magdalene Bill as unacceptable, unfair and full of broken promises to survivors.**

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR), the National Women's Council of Ireland, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and Amnesty International (Ireland) today called on the government to honour the promise it made to Magdalene survivors in June 2013, to implement all of Mr Justice John Quirke's recommendations for a Magdalene restorative justice scheme.

Criticising the *Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Bill 2014*, Maeve O'Rourke of JFMR said: "This draft legislation does not meet Judge Quirke's recommendation on healthcare for Magdalene women. It is an obvious and unacceptable paring back of what the government promised as part of the women's redress package. Judge Quirke could not have been clearer in recommending that each woman should receive a card entitling her to the full range of health services provided to state-infected Hepatitis-C survivors under the HAA card scheme. Instead, the Bill promises little more than the regular medical card, which most of the women already have."

Ms O'Rourke's criticism comes exactly 23 months after Enda Kenny's emotional apology to Magdalene survivors on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

Dr Katherine O'Donnell of JFMR said: "The women who have received their lump sum compensation and pensions have promised not to sue the State in exchange for the full redress package recommended by Judge Quirke. However, this legislation is in clear breach of the women's legitimate expectations and puts those waivers on shaky ground."

Claire McGettrick of JFMR added: "Without explanation, the government has also ignored Judge Quirke's recommendation to extend the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 to Magdalene women who lack full capacity so that applications to the Magdalene scheme can be made on their behalf and their assets can be managed by a court-appointed representative in their best interests. It is imperative that legislation is introduced immediately to protect women in institutionalised settings, to provide independent advocates and ensure that their interests are protected."

Orla O'Connor of NWCi said: "The Bill as currently proposed is a further denial of the rights of women survivors of the Magdalene laundries. It undermines the Scheme as proposed by Judge Quirke, which provided only minimal recognition for the abuse women suffered. A particular area of concern is the denial of full pension entitlements for the women. Judge Quirke clearly recommended that the women should be treated as if they had made full pension contributions and yet the government are refusing to back-date the pension entitlements for women. The women urgently require this compensation so as to provide a decent standard of living in their older years."

Mark Kelly of ICCL said: "Article 14 of the UN Convention Against Torture requires that people in the situation of the Magdalene women obtain redress and benefit from an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including 'as full rehabilitation as possible'. The UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) has made clear that this means that funding must be provided to restore, as far as possible, their independence and their full inclusion and participation in society. CAT has made crystal clear that this obligation 'cannot be postponed' nor may States renege upon it by pleading that they do not have the necessary resources. The Government must act now to honour its promise to the Magdalene women, in line with its international human rights obligations".

Colm O’Gorman of Amnesty International (Ireland) said: “Truth and justice have still not been provided to victims of human rights violations in the Magdalene Laundries. That the Government continues to assert that the McAleese interdepartmental inquiry was a comprehensive investigation is shocking. The Restorative Justice Scheme proposed by Justice Quirke and accepted by the Government did not even meet the human rights requirements of an effective remedy, but was seen as a welcome step by survivors. We remind the Government that women and girls in these institutions experienced a range of human rights abuses including inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrary deprivation of liberty and forced labour. We call on the Government to live up to its obligations in the Quirke Scheme.”

**Notes to editors:**

For details of the numerous healthcare services omitted from the draft legislation, please see attached “Briefing Note on Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Bill 2014”.

Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Bill 2014 is available here:

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/bills/2014/11114/b11114d.pdf>

Explanatory Memorandum is available here:

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/bills28/bills/2014/11114/b11114d-memo.pdf>

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