



Press Release, 15th February 2017, 7.30pm – for immediate release

State's systemic avoidance of taking responsibility for 'dark secrets' criticised again in Geneva

Adoption Rights Alliance (ARA) and Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) welcome the attention given once again by a UN Committee to the Irish government's ongoing failure to adequately investigate human rights abuses within Magdalene Laundries and within the adoption system at large. Both groups furnished detailed reports to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) at the end of January [links available in Notes to Editors].

CEDAW Committee Rapporteur, Patricia Schulz was critical of the Irish State's failure to face up to its 'dark secrets', stating that she regarded the Irish state as having a systemic intention to avoid taking responsibility for several human rights scandals. She referred particularly to the absence of a full public inquiry into Magdalene Laundries and to the very narrow Terms of Reference currently being considered by the '*Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters*' (The Commission), which in her opinion would result in no accountability by any party.

The Irish official delegation offered no response on the Magdalene Laundries issue, however Ms Carol Baxter, representing the Department of Justice and Equality, alleged in her opening statement that the Taoiseach's apology to Magdalene survivors happened despite the fact that 'there was no finding in the McAleese Report which indicated that the State had any liability' for the Magdalene Laundries.

In response to questions raised about the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, Ms Laura Hynes from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs stated that the government had deliberately chosen those institutions with a 'rehabilitation ethos'. Ms Hynes stated that the Terms of Reference for the Commission were drawn up so as to explicitly 'focus on Mother and Baby Homes instead of maternity hospitals or adoption agencies.' Madame Schulz said this attitude confirmed her worst fears and she received no response to her question as to why a government would only choose to examine the best of the worst of these institutions.

Susan Lohan, representing both ARA and JFMR at the hearings in Geneva, said it was clear from feedback following a lunchtime briefing with some committee members yesterday, that the CEDAW committee was troubled by the Irish State's failure to hold anyone accountable for the very serious historic human rights abuses against women in Magdalene Laundries, Mother and Baby Homes, State maternity hospitals and adoption agencies and they indicated a significant level of disquiet.

ARA and JFMR have called on Minister Katherine Zappone to urgently publish the September 2016 interim report from the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes.

Ends.

Notes to editors:

JFMR CEDAW Submission: <http://clannproject.org/wp-content/uploads/JFMR-report-to-CEDAW-for-the-66th-session-Ireland.pdf>

ARA CEDAW Submission: <http://clannproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Adoption-Rights-Alliance-CEDAW-Submission-Jan-2017.pdf>

In June 2016, JFMR and ARA launched *Clann: Ireland's Unmarried Mothers and their Children: Gathering the Data* (Clann) [<http://www.clannproject.org>], which is a joint initiative with global law firm, Hogan Lovells. Clann is assisting individuals affected by or involved with the treatment of unmarried mothers and their children to provide evidence to the ongoing Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters.

Clann Contact Details: info@clannproject.org

Clann Information Pack: <http://clannproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Clann-Information-Pack.zip>