

ONE CHILD

INTERNATIONAL

ONE CHILD INTERNATIONAL INC.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

www.onechildinternational.net

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June 6, 2011

Taoiseach Enda Kenny,
Department of the Taoiseach,
Government Buildings,
Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2

Re: 500 missing children some found in brothels, some working as slaves. An Open Letter.

Dear Taoiseach Kenny,

Further to the Irish Independent's article on Friday June 3rd, 2011, entitled '*Kids in HSE care ended up working in brothels*' I am writing to register my anger at this catastrophic mistreatment of children in the HSE's - in Ireland's - care.

Given the unbelievable severity of this mistreatment I am strongly suggesting the immediate firing of senior members of the Department of Health and Justice both of whom, according to the HSE's report, knew what was going on.

In June 2010, I met with a representative from the Department of Health in Dublin. At that time he told me that the number of missing children under direct State supervision was 500. Not dozens; 500. I was also told that they (the Dept of Health) 'hadn't a clue' where these children were. Well now we know. We find that these 'missing' children 'had been retraced to brothels, restaurants and private households where they may have been used as domestic slaves.' Slaves in Ireland?

Forget the abuse reports - the time for the intellectualization of child abuse is over. Action is needed today. If funding can be found for reports, funding can be found for action to help our children.

As the CEO of an international child advocacy I would like to make a number of suggestions to you regarding the welfare of children in Ireland's care.

1. Remove the dead wood who are responsible for maintaining the current grossly inadequate system and replace them with people with proven talent. Bring in expertise from other countries to help.
2. Stop intellectualizing this problem and act in protecting our children. Reports will collect dust; our children need protection - now.
3. Admit that nobody knows what to do. There is nothing being done that demonstrates any progress in child protection in Ireland despite the decade of warnings.
4. Put in place a task force to implement an effective child protection policy answerable to you. I can suggest members for this task force such as Nora Gibbons at Barnardo's and Ashley Balbernie at the ISPCC; people who get their hands dirty on a daily basis as they protect the children in their care.
5. Give this task force access to training in successful models of child protection all of which are readily available in the UK and the US so that they can examine what works and why.
6. Implement their recommendations.

Ireland could have a world-class system of child protection in place if the resistance to change can be overcome. We have met that resistance ourselves. Efforts on our behalf to implement or suggest change have been ignored for no other reason, I believe, that they instill irrational fear in those who enjoy the status quo.

Let me give you some examples of responses we have received to our efforts over the past year following a year-long investigation we made into child protection (or the lack of it) in Ireland.

Child Protection Forum: As an incentive in the Spring of 2010 we offered to host a fully paid-for forum in Dublin, flying in U.S. child protection specialists to meet their Irish counterparts - law enforcement, medical, judicial - for the exchange of ideas so that Ireland could cut the learning curve in getting a system in place. The offer was largely ignored and I received a message from a contact in the Gardai who asked 'what could they teach us that we don't know ourselves?' Obviously a great deal.

Gardai: We offered the Gardai a fully paid scholarship to send a member from their Domestic Violence Unit to the CEOP (<http://www.ceop.police.uk>) in London for training in child protection this year. In addition we offered the Gardai 5,000 sets of our child protection material packets - free - for members of the force so that they could learn what signs to look for in cases of abuse. Both offers were ignored - not even acknowledged.

Correspondence by post, email and telephone to the Department of Health (Dr. Reilly) and Children (Frances Fitzgerald) remain unacknowledged. Is this how the Department of Health works?

The expression of 'walking and talking like a duck' comes to mind as all of these actions add up to a reality that, despite the rhetoric, Ireland cares nothing about children.

There is a select resource of people in Ireland, and more abroad, amply qualified to help put a protection system in place. If you would like assistance in implementing real change our organization is ready and willing to help.

Le meas,

EVIN M DALY

Evin M. Daly
Founder/CEO
One Child International Inc./**Child AbuseWatch**
OFFICES IN FORT LAUDERDALE, DUBLIN AND SYDNEY
(561) 654 8245, 086 884 9193
edaly@abusewatch.net

cc. Dail, Seanad, Media.

1. Article in Independent: June 3, 2011: *'Kids in HSE care ended up working in brothels*
<http://www.independent.ie/national-news/wikileaks/kids-in-hse-care-ended-up-working-in-brothels-2665248.html>
2. Our website: www.abuswatch.net
3. My background in child protection: http://www.abusewatch.net/EMD_bio.php