
Tuam Committee Hearing

Opening Statement

My name is Anna Corrigan, and as well as being the appointed Spokesperson of the Tuam Babies Family Group, I am also a victim of that which occurred in the home.

My mother, Bridget Dolan was forced to enter the home, and my two brothers, who I didn't know even existed until relatively recently, were born in that home.

One of my brothers is recorded as having died in Tuam, the whereabouts of my second brother still remains to this day, unknown.

I also had an Aunt who sadly is recorded as having died aged 13 in an Industrial Home in Loughrea, Co. Galway. Like many others, her place of burial is currently not known.

My story is not unusual, there are many like it.

It is because of our stories and our experiences that it is essential that there be no further prevarication, no further procrastination, and no further obfuscation of the truth and that which occurred at Tuam, and for that matter, every other mother and baby home across the country.

Further, this issue is not limited to Mother and Baby homes, it is equally as applicable to the Industrial Homes and any other like institution.

I acknowledge that the purpose of today's hearing is not to consider anything other than the proposed legislation, but, we are doing a disservice to the countless that have suffered and continue to suffer, because of that which occurred and seemingly inability of those responsible to be truthful in their accounts, if we do not acknowledge the background to this legislation and that which has prompted it.

Further, we would be doing a disservice to the over 700 bodies of children that remain tossed without a care, into a hole in the ground, without a further thought, for decades.

Our initial position is that the legislation being proposed isn't required, there exists an appropriate statutory framework already, that allows for the exhumation of bodies found, and analysis of that which is discovered.

However, it is also accepted that legislation in one form or another is to be passed, given the clear intention of the government to do so.

With this in mind, it is essential that the legislation does what we need it to do.

It is not an opportunity for the grass to remain undisturbed on that which happened in the past, and it ought not be used as a tool to continue the opacity over this period in Irish history.

Those of us who are victims and survivors deserve and demand the truth, not only for ourselves, but the countless that have died not knowing.

As a result, there ought to be perhaps three central themes that run through any steps being taken to exhume Tuam and/or any other identified site, that being:

- a) to identify those buried;
- b) to establish whether there was any criminality; and
- c) to investigate that which led to such tragic events occurring so as to ensure that they cannot happen again.

The sole focus of this process should be victim centric so as to attempt to answer the plethora of questions regarding what exactly was allowed to happen within establishments such as Tuam,.

The legislation in its current form does not do this, it does not focus on any of these issue and thus, there is a very real risk that the questions so desperately asked by hundreds, if not thousands of individuals, will continue to remain unanswered.

The process ought to be as simple as possible and there ought to be no hurdles to surmount in seeking to investigate these sites, and identify the remains that are found.

Unfortunately, in its current form, the legislation would appear to be the opposite of this and is replete with opportunities to prevent exhumation and investigation.

In closing, I would implore any and all that have involvement in the process to remember that there is an absolute, and heavy, moral burden upon them to do what is right for those that tragically lost their lives, and those that remain not knowing.

Those that were held within the home were denied their human rights, and Ireland failed to respect those same rights, seemingly adopting a position that unmarried mothers did not deserve that respect.

Ireland remains bound by its obligations to those international human rights treaties and conventions to which it is a state party, it must honour those obligations, and do now that which it failed to do previously.

We demand, but more than that, we deserve, the truth.