



REACHING OUT

30th Anniversary Conference

Tuesday, 1 December 2015 · Dublin Castle



IRISH COUNCIL FOR PRISONERS OVERSEAS
Supporting Irish Prisoners Overseas and their Families

www.icpo.ie



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHADRUL BISPAP EAGHLIUGHACH ÉIREANN



Society of St Vincent de Paul



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins

I would like to send my best wishes to the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas as they mark their 30th anniversary.

It is estimated that, at any given time, up to 1,000 Irish prisoners are incarcerated overseas. Imprisonment, while always difficult, is especially so for those who are far away from home. For 30 years the ICPO has been reaching out across the world; extending a hand of friendship to Irish men and women struggling with unfamiliar judicial systems, different languages and lack of contact with family and friends.

I would like to thank the ICPO for the vital difference they have made to the lives of so many Irish citizens imprisoned abroad. I also commend your tireless efforts to help focus public attention on issues affecting those citizens, and your practical work in aid of justice and human rights for all Irish prisoners, no matter what their circumstances.

May I wish you every success as you continue with your vital work.



Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

I convey my best wishes and congratulations to the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas as it celebrates 30 years of support to prisoners and their families. The work of the ICPO, in offering a lifeline to those in loneliness and trauma, deserves to be recognised and honoured.

Being in prison anywhere is, and is always intended to be, a punishment. Being in prison overseas, far from family and friends, adds greater pain, severity and hardship to an already difficult situation.

When Pope Francis speaks about prisons and prisoners he focuses on the breadth of God's merciful love. He invites us to show mercy, which he says 'overcomes every wall, every obstacle' and can instil new life and hope in others. As we begin a Jubilee Year of Mercy in the Church I invite all followers of Jesus to pray for prisoners and their families.

I am grateful to the staff of the ICPO in Maynooth and in London, and to all those who have volunteered their time during the last 30 years in support of Irish prisoners overseas and their families at home. I thank all in the ICPO for their life-enhancing work and I wish them well for the future.

+ Eamon Martin



Mr Charles Flanagan TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

I wish to congratulate the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas as it celebrates 30 years working on behalf of Irish prisoners abroad and their families. The role of the ICPO in providing support and information to these prisoners and their families is invaluable, and makes a very positive difference to those in the most difficult circumstances. I also wish to thank the ICPO for working so closely over the years with my department, both at home and abroad, as we assist these particularly vulnerable Irish citizens and their families.



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

- 09:00 Registration, Tea/Coffee
- 09:45 *Welcoming Remarks and Brief Outline of Work of ICPO*
Bishop John Kirby, IECE Chair,
Bishop of Clonfert
- 10:00 *The Early Days of ICPO*
Nuala Kelly, First Coordinator of ICPO
- 10:30 **President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins**
- 10:55 Break
- 11:20 *Resettlement Needs of Returning Ex-Prisoners to Ireland*
Paul Gavin, Researcher,
ICPO commissioned research
- 11:55 *Current Trends and Contemporary Challenges Facing Prisoners Overseas and the Organisations that Support Them*
Pauline Crowe, OBE, Chief Executive,
Prisoners Abroad
- 12:30 Questions & Answers
- 12:45 Lunch
- 14:00 *The Right Type of Education – A Briefing on Education and Training Provision for Gypsy and Irish Traveller Prisoners in England and Wales*
Ellena Costello, Policy Officer,
Traveller Equality Project, Irish Chaplaincy
- 14:20 *The Importance of a Pastoral Outreach to Prisoners Overseas*
Father Gerry McFlynn, Manager,
ICPO London Office
- 14:40 *Family Matters – The Impact of Overseas Imprisonment on Families*
Claire O'Connell, ICPO Caseworker and
Family Support Worker
Denise, a mother with a son imprisoned
overseas will speak about her experiences
- 15:00 Questions & Answers
- 15:15 *Looking to the Future*
Brian Hanley, Coordinator,
ICPO Maynooth Office
- 15:30 *Closing Address*
Mr Charles Flanagan TD, Minister for Foreign
Affairs and Trade
- 15:40 *Concluding Remarks*
Mark Hennessy, Conference Chair

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Mark Hennessy is a journalist and broadcaster. He was appointed News Editor of *The Irish Times* in September of this year, having previously served as London editor and as political correspondent. As news editor, he assumes responsibility for news content across all platforms, print and digital.



Bishop John Kirby is Bishop of Clonfert. He is a member of the Bishops' Commission for Pastoral Care and is Chair of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants, under whose auspices the ICPO operates.



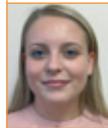
Nuala Kelly is coordinator of a project on ethnic data collection in Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. She was the first coordinator of ICPO and held the position for 17 years. Nuala also worked with Pobal for 10 years and served on the Human Rights Commission.



Paul Gavin is a PhD candidate at Kingston University, UK. His research examines the mental health of Irish prisoners in England and Wales. Paul has previously held senior research positions with the National Crime Council and the National Commission on Restorative Justice in Dublin.



Pauline Crowe, OBE, is Chief Executive of Prisoners Abroad, a UK charity caring for the welfare of British citizens held in foreign prisons. She has spent 30 years working in the voluntary sector in regional, national and international organisations in the fields of disability, medical research, membership and grant making.



Ellena Costello is project officer with the Traveller Equality Project at the Irish Chaplaincy, and a graduate of St Mary's University London with a BSc in Sociology. She worked as a researcher on *The Right Type of Education – A Briefing on Education and Training Provision for Gypsy and Irish Traveller Prisoners in England and Wales*.



Father Gerry McFlynn is manager of the ICPO London office – a project of the Irish Chaplaincy. He is a priest of the Diocese of Down and Connor and previously worked as a prison chaplain at HMP Wormwood Scrubs.



Claire O'Connell is a caseworker and family support officer in ICPO and is responsible for Australia, Asia, South and Central America, the Middle East and Africa. A solicitor, Claire worked in private practice with firms in the UK and Ireland, gaining experience in a number of areas including family law, criminal law and civil litigation.



Brian Hanley is ICPO coordinator and has worked with the organisation since 2008. A barrister, Brian holds a Masters in Law specialising in Criminal Justice and a Diploma in Criminology and Criminal Psychology.

This conference is kindly sponsored by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



THE WORK OF THE ICPO

- **IT IS ESTIMATED THAT**, at any one time, there are 1,200 Irish people in prison overseas. The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas works for Irish prisoners overseas wherever they are; we make no distinction in terms of religious faith, the nature of a prison conviction or of a prisoner's status. The ICPO has contact with Irish people in prison in more than 30 countries around the world.

'ICPO have been a lifeboat for my family during horrendously difficult times.'

Mother of prisoner

- **THE ICPO OFFERS** a comprehensive service to prisoners and to prisoners' families, which includes: provision of information on repatriation and deportation, assistance in making referrals to post-release support agencies for those returning to Ireland, a hardship fund for prisoners where access to food, water and medical treatment are very real concerns.

'Thank you for all you have done for me. You have made putting the pieces back together far easier and for that I am eternally grateful.'

Prisoner in the United States

- **LONELINESS AND ISOLATION** are common amongst Irish people imprisoned overseas. The ICPO operates an extensive prison visiting programme in Britain and elsewhere, and provides a newsletter twice yearly to its clients. The ICPO provides a pen friend scheme, language books and dictionaries where needed.

'Words almost fail me in trying to thank you for your visit yesterday. It was without a doubt the highlight of my year to date. Thank you.'

Prisoner in the UK

- **IN RECOGNITION OF** the hardship endured by prisoners' families, the ICPO offers assistance with prison visits, information about the different issues affecting their loved ones in prison, and holds a Family Information Day twice year.

'I am hopeful that the darkest days are soon to be gone. Your help and support over the years was both essential and inspiring. Thanks for everything.'

Prisoner in Brazil

MEDITATION ON FREEDOM

BY BILLY POWER, A MEMBER OF THE BIRMINGHAM SIX

I find myself alone in the exercise yard. All prisoners and guards have gone inside. I realise the significance of this. Excitedly, I make for the security fence and the outside prison wall. I scale both with surprising ease and drop to freedom. I only have moments. The alarm is raised.

More than sixteen years in prison, and now I am free!

I speed away from the wall, across the two fields to the wood on the other side of the stream, a few hundred yards from the prison. If I can make it to the wood, I will be clean away. Already the guards are on my trail and gaining on me. My sixteen years flash across my mind. I'm not going back, no matter what!

I make it to the stream. Ten seconds more across the small stream and up the other bank into the wood, and I will never be caught. My mind is very clear. Less than sixty seconds behind are my pursuers.

I suddenly halt! I can hardly believe my eyes. What can this be in front of me? A figure hanging on a tree, crucified like Christ. My mind takes in the nails, the thorns and all.

And I am very confused.

Is this Christ? Is it someone else? A prisoner?

Who could have done this to him, whoever he is?

He hangs there in abject misery and total suffering. Virtually dead.

What can I do? There is nothing. He will be dead in seconds, and yet I cannot pass by.

I glance at the freedom on the other bank. I look back to the prison guards. In half a minute I will be captured to face the rest of my life behind those hated bars. And yet, I cannot pass on.

I hear a murmur: 'Water, I'm thirsty. Just a drink of water!' And, in the eternity of the moment, I come to realise that this poor suffering person's drink of water is the most important thing in the world this very moment. I feel the tears rise as I stoop with cupped hands to the cool stream. I raise them to his parched lips and he tries to drink. His head falls limp. He is dead.

I am grabbed from behind and led away, full of peace and joy at knowing that I did not pass HIM by. In this, I have discovered true freedom.

Lord, you said,

'If you make my word your home, you will indeed be my disciples. You will learn the truth and the truth will make you free.'

Lord,

I pray for the grace and strength to open my heart to your word that I may find true freedom – true freedom that comes from meeting you, wherever I may be.

Amen.