

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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From: Jennifer Furey, Public Relations Representative  
6238 Oakland Ave., 3W  
St. Louis, MO. 63139

*Mother's Day Demonstration for Roisin McAliskey*

Local civil rights and human rights organizations will take part in a Mother's Day demonstration on Saturday, May 10 at 4:30 pm on behalf of Roisin (pronounced roe-SHEEN) McAliskey, a pregnant Irish woman currently being held without charge by the British government. Participants will gather in front of Children's Hospital on Kingshighway and walk from there to the Cathedral of St. Louis at 4431 Lindell. On the way they will gather signatures for a petition to be presented to the British Embassy in Washington asking for McAliskey's release on humanitarian grounds. They will pass out paper roses with tags explaining McAliskey's case; roses also will be mailed to the British Embassy. A Mother's Day card for Roisin will be circulated. A young woman representing Roisin McAliskey will be handcuffed and pushed in a wheelchair to bring home the reality of the injustice of McAliskey's continued imprisonment.

Roisin McAliskey is a 25-year-old community worker who had taught developmentally disabled children before her arrest. Her mother is Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, an Irish civil rights activist who was at one time the youngest woman ever elected to the British Parliament. Roisin is currently being held without charge or bail in a British prison. She is wanted for questioning in Germany for an IRA mortar attack on a British Army base in which no one was injured. German eyewitnesses cannot identify Roisin McAliskey as one of the suspects. She does not have a passport, and there is no physical evidence tying her to the attack.

Roisin McAliskey has asthma, arthritis, and an ulcer. She is almost 9 months pregnant and now requires a wheelchair because of cramps and swelling in her legs. She may go into labor at any time. She weighs less than 100 pounds, despite her advanced pregnancy. Her baby has developed an irregular heartbeat. A doctor has recommended that she be moved to a hospital immediately, but prison officials have refused.

Until international outcry brought the practice to an end within the past few weeks, McAliskey was strip searched twice a day, despite the fact that she was allowed no contact with family members or other prisoners; more than 100 strip searches were carried out on Roisin McAliskey. She was threatened with the taking away of her child after its birth and with being shackled to her stirrups during labor. After international protests to the British government by Cardinal O'Connor, the Irish government, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, prison authorities said she would be taken to a hospital for the birth but would be handcuffed after the baby was born.

The human rights abuses carried out on Roisin McAliskey have been condemned by American and Irish politicians, international human rights organizations, and religious leaders. The May 10 demonstration is one of many demonstrations taking place across the country to bring the plight of one pregnant Irish woman to the attention of the American people in the hope of securing freedom and appropriate medical care for Roisin McAliskey as the birth of her baby nears. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, Missourians for Matt Morrison, and St. Louis Irish Northern Aid are sponsoring the demonstration and have invited many other human rights, civil rights, and feminist groups in St. Louis to speak out on behalf of an innocent woman unjustly jailed.

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For more information, contact Jennifer Furey 523-4987 (daytime) or 781-7981 (evening)