



ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY: Sinn Féin TD Pearse Doherty

Transfer of fiscal powers to EU 'not acceptable for solving euro crisis'

SINN Féin Finance Spokesperson Pearse Doherty TD has criticised the outcome of the August 16 meeting between French and German leaders Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel, describing the EU leaders as out of touch with reality and arrogant.

The Sinn Féin TD said: "It is not satisfactory for Irish citizens or indeed European citizens that only two heads of state are meeting to discuss what is the deepest crisis facing the eurozone and European citizens since the union was formed. The Irish government should be actively seeking engagement in meetings which concern this state's future."

Mr Doherty said that Sinn Féin would resist any solution to the Eurozone crisis which involved a further transfer of economic sovereignty to Brussels.

He said: "We are in the midst of a crisis that affects every citizen in Europe and only two European heads of state are meeting to discuss it. This union is allegedly a union of partners. We are all part of one currency and that currency is imploding as a result of poor political decisions.

"While Sarkozy and Merkel meet to discuss Ireland's financial survival, among other things, the Irish government is content to observe proceedings from afar and offer up its availability for discussing the conclusions arrived at. This is completely unacceptable for Irish citizens.

"The fiscal interference we have suffered to date has served to worsen not only our economy, but all those on the periphery of Europe who have been forced to honour private bond-holder debt, renege on investment plans and implement austerity budgets. Increasing that type of fiscal centralism is a completely irrational response in the face of it having not worked one iota to date.

"Sinn Féin, like all progressive European forces, is advocating a restructuring of private debt; the implementation of fair taxation measures; the curtailing of wasteful expenditure in public budgets; intensive stimulus packages; and the examination of the role of the European Central Bank (ECB) as a solution to this crisis.

"Until the issue of sovereigns holding private debt and indebted banks being continually bailed out is dealt with, this crisis will limp on."

Irish Government 'sleepwalking into second bailout'

SPEAKING following the downgrading of Ireland's credit rating by Moody's to junk status on July 12, Sinn Féin Finance Spokesperson Pearse Doherty accused the Government of sleepwalking Ireland into a second bailout because of its failure to deal with the banks and the debt crisis.

Mr Doherty said: "The downgrade by Moody's of Ireland's credit rating to junk status is another wake-up call to the government and our European partners. The key driver in Moody's decision is the growing possibility that Ireland will require a second bailout and sovereign bondholders will have to absorb losses.

"The Government's failure to acknowledge that Ireland's debt levels are unsustainable and its inaction in reducing those levels have placed us in this position.

"Sinn Féin has consistently said that Ireland will have to shed some of its debt burden if we are to regain entry into the bond markets.

"However, rather than impose losses on sovereign bondholders as part of a second bailout we have argued that the losses must be imposed now and only on the private banking debt.

"The failure of the government to impose losses on the €61 billion of private banking debt, two-thirds of which is unguaranteed by the state, is a catastrophic mistake.

"Far more significant than the actual downgrade is the fact that Moody's has stated that a second bailout is likely and Ireland is likely to default post 2013.

"The government's inaction is leading us to a second bailout, ensuring a default on sovereign debt, prolonging the loss of our financial sovereignty and imposing a decade of severe austerity.

"While the government can rightly blame Fianna Fáil for the first bailout the second one will clearly be their responsibility. This can all be avoided if the correct decisions are taken now."

EU/IMF profit on Irish loans to exceed €13bn

SINN Féin Vice President Mary Lou McDonald has described figures released by the Department of Finance on July 13, which reveal that the total EU/IMF profit on loans to Ireland will exceed €13 billion, as "outrageous".

Ms McDonald said: "Taken together the EU, European member states and the IMF will make more than €13.6 billion profit from loans extended to Ireland under the EU/IMF austerity programme.

"These so-called friends are imposing savage austerity on the Irish people, in the form of withdrawal of emergency services from hospitals, reductions in special needs assistants and cuts to life and death benefits such as the winter fuel allowance. They are also demanding that the Government waste billions of taxpayer's money on bailing out toxic banking debts in Anglo Irish and Irish Nationwide.

"It is time for the Taoiseach to send a clear signal he is no longer willing to accept such naked profiteering and that he will no longer pay these outrageous surcharges."



MARCH: Thousands gathered in South Armagh on August 14 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike

30th anniversary of 1981 Hunger Strike

Adams: Republican strategy making significant progress

SINN Féin President Gerry Adams TD gave the main speech at the march and commemoration in Camlough, in South Armagh, on August 14 to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike in which 10 Irish republican prisoners died in the struggle for political status.

The Sinn Féin leader described the prison struggle, like the struggle outside the prisons, as a battle of wills. It was about the right of the Irish people to self-determination and independence and freedom.

Mr. Adams said the struggle “was about uniting Ireland and that struggle continues today”.

“Core republican objectives are at the heart of everything we do today. The Sinn Féin political strategy is about achieving these objectives,” Mr Adams said.

“And let there be no doubt about it. We have a viable project and we have made, are making, and we will continue to make significant progress,” he said.

“Thirty years ago the north was embroiled in war. British troops were dug in on these hilltops; people were dying in their scores; nationalist areas were under military occupation and unionists were entrenched behind their laager mentality.

Peaceful way forward

“The Sinn Féin strategy brought the British and the unionists and the Irish government to the negotiating table.

“Thirty years ago there was an Orange State. The Orange State is gone. The Government of Ireland Act is gone. The right of citizens to opt for a United Ireland is equal to that of those who wish to retain the union.

“Sinn Féin is from that democratic tradition which believes that the British government never had any right to be in Ireland; does not have any right to be in Ireland and never will have any right to be in Ireland.

“There is now an entirely peaceful way to bring an end to British rule. Our duty is to develop democratic ways and means to achieve and to unite behind the leadership and the campaigns which will bring this about.

“Yes, it will be challenging. Yes, it will be frustrating. The enemies of change are strong. But that never stopped us in the past.

“Of course we have a huge job of work to do to persuade unionists of the merits of the republican and democratic position. But we are also in a very good place to do this.

“Sinn Féin is the largest nationalist party in the Assembly and on local Councils. There are five Sinn Féin Ministers, including our leader Martin McGuinness, who as Deputy First Minister shares the Office of First and

Deputy First Minister with Peter Robinson as an equal in all matters.

“The DUP and UUP, who opposed power sharing, are sharing power in government. There are all-Ireland political functioning institutions.

“And in all of these political institutions Sinn Féin is defending the rights and entitlements of all citizens and promoting our republican agenda for unity and equality.

Increased political strength

“This year Sinn Féin increased our political representation in local councils and in the Assembly in the north. In the Oireachtas today, we have a Sinn Féin team of 14 TDs and three seanadóirí. And in constituencies across the south, especially those where we came close to winning Dáil seats, Sinn Féin is growing organisationally and electorally.

“In Leinster House our new Dáil team is proving itself to be effective and efficient. For many we are now the real opposition party, challenging the Fine Gael and Labour government as it imposes a disastrous austerity programme and introduces new stealth taxes on working families.

“The fact is that Irish republicanism is stronger today than at any time since partition.

“But to make further advances and to be able to exercise even greater political influence and power, we need to build our struggle.

“There is no more important time than this for the republican principles of equality, fraternity, and freedom.”

The Sinn Féin President concluded: “Achieving our republican goals will not be easy. While Unionist leaders now see the benefits of working on an all Ireland basis, they remain opposed to a united Ireland. So there is work to be done peacefully and democratically with them. Sinn Féin is up for that work.

‘Governments must face responsibilities’

“The British government, despite its protestations to the contrary, and its systems, has yet to face up to its responsibilities to the people of this island. It can best do this by leaving us to manage our own affairs.

“The Irish government, and in particular the Irish political establishment, is partitionist.

“That is evident in so many ways – for example, in the resistance thus far to extending voting rights in Presidential elections to Irish citizens living in the north.

“But there are many people in Ireland who want rid of outsiders ruling us whether from London or the IMF and EU. They want a free and united and independent Ireland.

“I believe there are many people in Ireland who share our goals of a free and united and independent Ireland.

“By building political strength and developing alliances we can achieve our goals.

“Sinn Féin is clear about our strategy, clear about our goals and clear about the road map to the future.

“We will not be distracted or put off course. We have a vision of a new future, a better future, and we have the spirit and the confidence to work with others to achieve this.”



DAY OF ACTION: Sinn Féin activists hold a day of action in July against hospital closures and cuts to the health service

'Health service now at breaking point'

IN EARLY July Sinn Féin placed a motion before the Dáil in relation to the deepening crisis in the health services and the threatened closure of rural A&Es.

The motion calls on the Government to live up to its electoral commitments and ensure equal access to safe and efficient hospital services for all, without discrimination.

Sinn Féin President and Louth TD Gerry Adams said: "Our health system is at breaking point. We are facing an impending crisis in our public hospitals due to the shortage of junior doctors from July 11.

"This is not news. We have known for years that the hospital system is totally over-reliant on junior doctors. Successive Governments have recognised this but have failed to address the problem and now it is looming again, worse than ever.

"We now look set to lose A&E departments in hospitals across the state. Fine Gael and Labour made repeated pre-election commitments to maintain services at smaller hospitals. These commitments have proved worthless as they impose savage health cuts because they value senior bank bondholders more than they value patients in our public health services.

"Our motion calls on the Government and all those TDs who made firm promises to their constituents that they would protect hospitals including Roscommon, Navan, Letterkenny, Portlaoise, Loughlinstown, Ballinasloe, Limerick, Clonmel, Mallow and Bantry, to stick by their word and stand up for the people who rely on these hospitals.

"We want the Government to stand by its electoral commitments and ensure equal access to safe and efficient hospital services for all, without discrimination based on income or geographic location."

Sinn Féin welcome release of Brendan Lillis

SINN Féin MP for West Belfast Paul Maskey welcomed the news on August 18 that seriously ill Maghaberry prisoner Brendan Lillis was to be released from custody. Mr Lillis's release comes after significant lobbying by Brendan's family and Sinn Féin in recent months.

Mr Maskey said: "No republican would condone the criminal activities Brendan Lillis was accused of being involved in.

"However, this was a case of a seriously ill man who had been deemed too sick to stand trial continuing to be held in prison. Sinn Féin are absolutely opposed to the revocation of licenses. It is tantamount to internment and goes against natural justice.

"From the start what this case required was compassion from the criminal justice system. It was obvious that Brendan Lillis posed no threat to society – he has been bed-ridden for almost two years.

"Myself and colleagues have held numerous meetings with the prison administration and the Justice Minister David Ford in an attempt to secure Brendan Lillis's release.

"Recently Sinn Féin also made a written submission to the Parole Commissioners. We are satisfied that common sense has now prevailed and Brendan Lillis has been freed from prison to continue his medical care in hospital."

Sinn Féin meet with Maghaberry prisoners

ASINN Féin delegation consisting of the Vice-Chair of the Justice Committee, Raymond McCartney MLA and committee members Sean Lynch MLA and Jennifer McCann MLA met with prisoners in Roe House in Maghaberry jail on August 22.

Speaking after the meeting Mr McCartney said: "While there are ongoing concerns that the prisoners are protesting about we welcome the resolution of the concerns around family and legal visits which have now resumed without undue restrictions.

"Beyond this there is the issue of Marian Price and Martin Corry. Both are being held following the revoking of their license by the British secretary of state.

"We stated at the time this was wrong and is tantamount to internment without trial. We are reiterating our call for their release.

"It is essential that prisoners' rights are protected and that human rights are to the fore of the prison regime. We also firmly believe that the full implementation of the agreement reached last August is essential and if applied would resolve all outstanding issues."

Police Ombudsman 'must resign to restore confidence in office'

COMMENTING after leaks of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Report into the operation of the Police Ombudsman's Office appeared in the *Sunday Times* on August 14, Sinn Féin spokesperson on Policing Gerry Kelly repeated the demand for Al Hutchinson to go and called for the immediate publication of the report.

Mr Kelly said: "A Sunday newspaper carried a series of extracts from the Criminal Justice Inspectorate report into the operation of the Police Ombudsman Office. It is clear that Dr. Michael Maguire's report is complete and it now needs to be published without further delay.

"Public confidence in Police Ombudsman Al Hutchinson is already at rock bottom and it is important that swift action is taken to restore the credibility of this crucially important policing structure.

"If the leaked detail contained in this report is true it is clear that the removal of Mr Hutchinson, necessary as that is, will in itself not suffice.

Lack of Independence

"It seems that this report has uncovered a series of deep failures including a lowering of operational independence; key staff disassociating themselves from wrongful findings; the dominance of ex-police officers in decision making; an arrangement to avoid criticism of Special Branch in inquiries into historic cases and the rewriting of reports at their final stage in contradiction to the findings.

"There are other deep-seated problems identified including the use of former members of the RUC in carrying out investigations. The conflict of interest this causes in the office's work on historic collusion cases is very obvious," Mr Kelly said.

"It has been already well documented that there are very serious issues of independence and effectiveness in the Police Ombudsman's Office. The report vindicates the deep criticism of the Office by the families in the cases of the McGurks Bar bombing and the Loughinisland Massacre.

"We have already called for Al Hutchinson to resign in the wake of the publication of the Ombudsman report into the Loughinisland massacre last month.

"Mr Hutchinson arbitrarily decided to change the Judge Corey definition of collusion and managed to produce a report which ignored completely the role of state agents in the planning, execution and cover-up of the Loughinisland massacre.

"He managed to dismiss the fact that despite the identity of those responsible being known and over 170 separate evidential exhibits nobody has ever been charged.

"Al Hutchinson by his own actions has undermined entirely community confidence in his ability to continue in such an important policing role.

"If the leaks in the CJi Report are true then it seems what has been going on within the Police Ombudsman's Office is actually even worse than people had feared."



GREEN ENERGY FUTURE: Sinn Féin MEP Bairbre de Brún

Failure to toughen EU carbon target a mistake

BAIRBRE de Brún MEP expressed disappointment on July 5 that the European Parliament failed to back a proposal to toughen the EU's target on reducing CO2 emissions from a 20% cut compared to 1990 levels by 2020 to the more ambitious level of a 30% cut.

Speaking from the European Parliament in Brussels, Ms de Brún said: "Some of the MEPs appeared to be concerned that the stronger target would hamper EU industry but the opposite is the case. We need to send a clear signal to industry that investing in greener technologies will help EU competitiveness. Elsewhere in the world countries are moving much more decisively and the EU cannot afford to get left behind.

"Studies have shown that a 10% increase in the target would reduce our yearly oil and gas imports by €40 billion whilst simultaneously encouraging a much-needed uptake in green technologies. A legally binding 30% target would inevitably encourage the move to cleaner renewable energy and subsequently increase fuel security.

Ms de Brún added: "Moving to a 30% reduction target is no longer only a question of climate policy. As the effects of the recession continue to be felt throughout Europe, it is essential that we take tangible action to move to a low-carbon economy and by doing so create millions of green jobs for our citizens."

Ferris raises concerns new proposals will harm workers' rights

SINN Féin TD Martin Ferris expressed concerns on August 16 at Enterprise Minister Richard Bruton's proposals to amalgamate a number of workers' rights and equality agencies and bodies.

Mr Ferris was responding to the publication of the minister's consultation paper on the reform of the state's employment rights and industrial relations structures and procedures.

He said: "Those concerned by the continuing attacks on ordinary workers by this government, including the recent 'reform proposals' as regards the joint labour committees (JLCs) will be particularly disquieted by any proposals which reduce the amount of scrutiny and oversight placed upon employers.

"If we are serious about protecting workers and about equality, we should ensure that the structures and agencies put in place to protect them are appropriate, robust and properly resourced.

"These agencies have very different roles, which might suffer from a lack of independence from one another.

"I would particularly raise concern as regards any possible amalgamation of courts or tribunals, and I would stress that there is a clear need for workers to have the optimum opportunity to have full recourse to the courts, including at appellate level as well as at first instance.

"The Minister's proposals come hot on the heels of his anti-worker approach to reforming the JLCs. My concern is that the minister is using a smokescreen of rationalisation and reform to remove the protections workers rely upon.

"There is a need for protection and indeed for robust protection.

"Sinn Féin will be examining these proposals in depth, and will oppose any efforts to hollow out hard won protections for the rights of workers."

Ó Caoláin calls for Government apology to Magdalene detainees

CAVAN-MONAGHAN Dáil Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin hosted a briefing session for Dáil Deputies and Senators and their support staff in Leinster House on July 5 on the issue of the confinement, detention and treatment of thousands of women forced to work in the so-called Magdalene Laundries over several decades.

Welcoming representatives of the Justice for Magdalenes campaign group to Leinster House, Deputy Ó Caoláin said: "The long struggle by Justice for Magdalenes on behalf of the thousands of women held in the Magdalene laundries, and on behalf of their children, has done much to advance their cause.

"It was the hard work of Justice for Magdalenes that conclusively disproved the state's claims that the women were in these institutions 'voluntarily', or solely at the behest of their families. That fiction has now been firmly laid to rest, thanks to documents uncovered by JFM.

"This year their efforts have achieved another landmark success. In response to the Justice for Magdalenes submission, the UN Committee on Torture called for an independent investigation into the abuse carried out in the laundries, and redress for the women held there. It also recommended prosecution and penalties for those who perpetrated the abuse.

"In response, the Government has pledged to establish an independently chaired interdepartmental committee to 'clarify any State interaction with the Magdalene Laundries'.

"The promise of this long-overdue investigation is welcome. However, it is regrettable that the government did not see fit to issue an apology along with its announcement. The Minister believes it would be more appropriate to wait until the outcome of the investigation.

"Some of the survivors may not be able to wait that long. They are all entitled to an apology now. To issue it would not preclude a further apology when the full extent of the Government's complicity is revealed."



CAMPAIGN: Members of 'Campaign for a United Ireland' with State Senator Leland Yee at the San Francisco Mayoral Debate to thank him for authoring and steering a resolution through the California State Senate calling for the reunification of Ireland. From left: Ciaran Scally, George Trainor, State Senator and Mayoral candidate Leland Yee, Patrick O'Malley Daly, Pat Uniack, Mike Carty and Sean Murphy

San Francisco mayoral candidates pledge support for Irish Unity

THE international 'Uniting Ireland' campaign was again effectively raised in San Francisco in July. A Mayoral Forum, organised by the Irish American Democratic Club of San Francisco, invited all the candidates running in the election for the position of Mayor of San Francisco to respond to issues raised by interest groups in the city.

The candidates were asked to state their position on the reunification of Ireland. The response was unanimous – with all candidates committing to continue the support already articulated by the San Francisco City Council in its Resolution calling for Irish Unity and pledging help to achieve it. Visit www.aunitedireland.org for more information.

Martin Ferris speaks in Australia on 'Uniting Ireland'

SINN Féin Kerry TD Martin Ferris visited Australia in late July and early August as part of the 'Uniting Ireland' campaign. As well as meeting political leaders and trade union representatives, Mr Ferris addressed hundreds of people at a series of public meetings in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne on the economic crisis in Ireland and the ongoing struggle for Irish unity and independence.

The tour was organised by Friends of Sinn Féin Australia and the Casement Group Melbourne.

Mr Ferris was introduced to a number of political representatives during his visit, including former prime minister Paul Keating, Federal Justice Minister Brendan O'Connor, Senator Gavin Marshall and a number of Victorian and WA state MPs.

Mr Ferris also met CFMEU National Secretary Michael O'Connor, the CFMEU's WA state secretary Kevin Reynolds and assistant state secretary Joe McDonald, Sydney secretary of the MUA Paul McAleer and Irish National Association President Denis O'Flynn.

The Sinn Féin representative also addressed a lunch hosted by the Signcraft Group in Melbourne on the theme of 'Irish Peace and Unity'.

Speaking at a Casement Group function at Melbourne's Celtic Club, Mr Ferris said: "The Irish people are crying out for honest leadership, for profound change in the political system that has failed them so badly, for a new direction – a new republic."

"The new republic we envision would be based on the still-relevant vision of the leaders of the 1916 Rising – that is, to 'cherish all of the children of the nation equally', and to use the resources of the country to benefit all of the people, not just the self-appointed elite."

"And the new republic would of course need to deal with the negative and divisive impact of partition; it would need to be an agreed Ireland between all shades of opinion on the island."

"For centuries Britain's involvement in Ireland has been the source of conflict; partition, discord and division. The Irish peace process has delivered an end to conflict and that is to be welcomed."

"But the underlying cause of conflict persists – the British government's claim of jurisdiction over a part of Ireland. It is this denial of the Irish people's right to self-determination, freedom and independence that is the core outstanding issue that must be resolved."

Organising Australian support

Speaking at the end of the visit, Mr Ferris said Sinn Féin is currently organising a series of large public meetings in Ireland on the topic of a new republic, involving a broad range of people from different backgrounds, with a particular emphasis on involving unionism.

"The Irish diaspora has a major role to play in this campaign," he said.

"Sinn Féin has organised a series of successful events over the past two years around the issue of a new republic in the US, Canada and Britain, and now Australia, on how the Irish diaspora and supporters can help to accelerate this goal, and help create the international environment for the success of this vision."

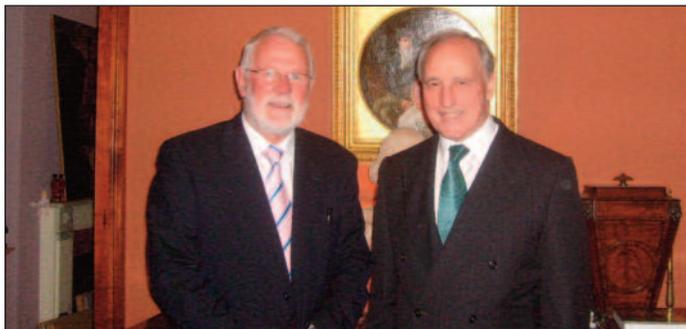
"My trip here to Australia is part of this process. As part of the trip I was able to visit the republican section at Waverly Cemetery in Sydney, where United Irish leader Michael Dwyer is buried. I also visited Fremantle prison, where the six Fenian prisoners escaped on the Catalpa ship to the US in 1876."

At Trades Hall in Melbourne Ferris spoke at the plaque in memory of the 10 republican prisoners who died on hunger strike in Long Kesh in 1981 in the protest for political status. This year is the 30th anniversary of their deaths and events are being held across Ireland and across the world to commemorate the hunger strikers.

"There is a long history of Irish activism here in Australia – from republican activism aimed at building support for Irish unity, to Irish involvement in the struggle for workers' rights and social justice here in Australia, particularly in the trade union movement," Mr Ferris said.

"I have been enormously impressed by the people I've met here – by their understanding of the political situation and challenges in Ireland today and their commitment to working towards achieving Irish reunification."

"We hope to continue working together with the Irish community and supporters here in Australia to organise a series of conferences on Irish unity next year."



AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT: From top: Martin Ferris addresses hundreds of supporters at the Casement Group Melbourne function; Martin meets former PM Paul Keating in Sydney; Martin meets CFMEU National Secretary Michael O'Connor in Melbourne; Denis O'Flynn from the Irish National Association shows Martin Michael Dwyer's grave in Waverly cemetery, Sydney; and a group of trade unionists gather at Victorian Trades Hall where Martin spoke about the 1981 hunger strikers at a memorial plaque unveiled there by Martin McGuinness in 2000

'Ireland should drive international response to East Africa crisis'

ON JULY 26 Sinn Féin spokesperson on Foreign Affairs, Pádraig Mac Lochlainn TD, has called on the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Eamon Gilmore, to ensure that Ireland is a moral leader driving the international response to the East African crisis that has already claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people.

He was speaking after attending a meeting between the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee and the heads of three Irish aid agencies working in the region, Concern, Trócaire and Oxfam Ireland.

Mr Mac Lochlainn said: "While the meeting agreed today that although Ireland's contribution of €7 million to this crisis, in proportion to our population, is to be commended, the international response in general has ranged from relatively poor to appalling.

"This is an opportunity for Ireland to demonstrate moral leadership. Ireland and our wide range of aid agencies are respected across the world for being leaders in overseas aid and development. The recent visit by the former President of Ireland and UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, to Somalia has shone a light on the path for our government.

"The Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs must immediately engage with their EU and international counterparts to ensure that all countries contribute equally on a per capita basis to the US\$1.87 billion target set by the UN. At this point, there is a shameful shortfall of \$850 million.

"There are serious questions about the commitment of the US and many EU countries to resolving this crisis and saving literally hundreds of thousands of lives.

"A good starting point for the UN and the EU is to heed the advice of aid agencies operating in the region such as Concern, Trócaire and Oxfam Ireland as well as the many other heroic NGO volunteers on the ground."



STATEHOOD: Bairbre de Brún and six other MEPs at the International Meeting in Jerusalem: Recognition of the Palestinian State

De Brún travels to Palestine before UN petition on statehood

SPeAKING from Jerusalem on July 11 during a four-day visit to Palestine and Israel in advance of Palestine submitting the question of Palestinian statehood to the United Nations Bairbre de Brún MEP said: "Our conference and visit to Jerusalem and the West Bank comes at a very opportune time, as the Palestinian Authority prepares to submit the question of Palestinian statehood to the United Nations in the autumn."

Ms de Brún was one of seven MEPs in the visiting delegation.

"We had the opportunity to discuss these issues with President Abbas, with Prime Minister Fayyad, with Hanan Ashrawi and PLC members from all parties and with some Knesset members and NGOs," she said.

"The EU must now promote at the wider international level its already agreed position in favour of a Palestinian State on the 1967 borders unless the parties agree otherwise with East Jerusalem as its capital."



Adams meets senior Palestinian delegation in Dublin ahead of UN vote

SINN Féin President Gerry Adams TD on July 13 led a Sinn Féin delegation (pictured above) including party Foreign Affairs spokesperson Pádraig MacLochlainn TD and Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD, in a meeting with a senior Palestinian delegation, led by Dr. Nabil Shaath, who is a leading member of Fatah, and a former Chief Negotiator and Foreign Minister and for the Palestinian Authority.

Dr. Shaath is currently involved in a round of meetings across EU states in which he is advocating support for a UN resolution in support of Palestinian statehood.

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams TD speaking after the meeting said: "I reiterated Sinn Féin's support for the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian people have the right to independence and self-determination and to a viable Palestinian state.

"Sinn Féin supports the Palestinian people in their efforts to achieve statehood, based on the 1967 borders.

"At this critical juncture in the difficult process of achieving a political settlement in that region there is an opportunity for the Irish government to take the lead in encouraging other European governments to support the Palestinian people.

"The Irish government should indicate now its full support for Palestinian UN Membership in the autumn."

Mr Adams added: "I have visited the Middle East. I do not underestimate the difficulties in seeking to resolve the multiplicity of issues that need to be resolved, including a viable Palestinian state; Israeli occupation of Palestinian land; the siege of Gaza; the settlements; water rights; refugees; prisoners; the Separation wall and Jerusalem.

"However, with international support progress can be made."

'Israel has serious questions to answer over MV Saoirse'

Earlier in July, Mr Adams raised the damage done to the Irish Ship to Gaza, the MV Saoirse, in its efforts bring much needed humanitarian aid to the besieged people of Gaza in the Freedom Flotilla 2.

Mr Adams said: "Serious questions must be asked of the Israeli government about the events surrounding the MV Saoirse and a thorough investigation of the damage done to the Irish boat is required.

"The blockade of the Gaza strip is illegal. The boarding of the flotilla by Israeli forces last May and the killing of nine aid workers was an illegal and appalling attack.

"I strongly support the right of the humanitarian aid workers and others to deliver very necessary humanitarian aid to the people of that region which they are being illegally denied by the Israeli authorities.

"The situation in that region and the illegal blockade of Gaza will not go away. It must be faced up to and the siege ended if there is to be any hope for peace.

"The Irish government can play a key role in this by giving leadership within Europe and supporting the right of the Palestinian people to their own state."

OTHER NEWS:

* On June 8 Sinn Féin Belfast City Councillor **Jim McVeigh** travelled to Beirut to speak at a conflict resolution conference in Lebanon organised by International Alert, with a particular focus on learning lessons from Ireland and South Africa.

* Sinn Féin's **Barry McColgan** travelled to Corsica from August 5-8 to participate in a conference aimed at building international support for the Corsican struggle for national independence, organised by Corsica Libera.