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UNITED STATES UNITED IRELAND

A Week is a Long Time in Politics

A Letter From Ireland

a Chara,

They say that a week is a long time in politics. Last week I was part of the Sinn Féin delegation to Washington and New York. While Ireland was the focus of the week's events, the siege in Gaza was rightly an ever-present issue and featured in every meeting.

Some had called for a boycott of events. The SDLP, the party of John Hume, refused to travel and engage with political leaders or the US Administration. That is their choice. If all parties and the Irish Government had followed their lead then the urgent need for a ceasefire, humanitarian aid, hostage release, and a political process to secure a two-state solution would not have been made directly to decision-makers.

Michelle O'Neill raised the issue directly to President Biden. Mary Lou McDonald engaged in lengthy discussions on the issue with the Administration, with political leaders including Rep. Rashida Tlaib, and in public comments at Georgetown University.

The Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, did the same at events and in public comments in the White House standing beside the President. Ireland's position on Palestine was well articulated.

I was no sooner back in Ireland, unpacking and following up emails from the visit, when the news broke that Leo Varadkar would be stepping down as leader of Fine

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This triggers the process of electing a new leader of Fine Gael, this would be completed by their Ard Fheis (annual conference) on April 6th. The new leader will then be nominated for the position of Taoiseach with a vote in the Dáil (Irish Parliament). The Fine Gael leader will have to rely on the support of their coalition partners in Fianna Fáil and the Greens to secure the position of Taoiseach. If they refuse to endorse the new leader then it will likely trigger a general election.

As of today there is only one declared contender, Simon Harris TD. A former health and current Higher Education Minister. He has been a TD since 2011 and is seen as a Fine Gael insider having served in government for 10 years.

When he resigned, Leo Varadkar said he believed that he was not the right person to lead his party into elections. This is set to be a historic year with Local Government and European elections in June and an anticipated general election in the Autumn.

Both Fianna Fáil and the Greens have stated that they will support a new Fine Gael leader as Taoiseach. The parties seem to be running scared of an election.

The coalition that has been in power since 2020 is a government that no one voted for.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil ran on a platform opposing going into government together. After the election that pledge was thrown out the window for the sake of blocking Sinn Féin, the largest party, from entering government.

Part of the deal was for a revolving Taoiseach, first Fianna Fáil and now Fine Gael. They believe the highest office in government is theirs and theirs alone to determine.

To appoint the next leader of Fine Gael as Taoiseach without an election is a continuation of that entitlement.

Legally, there has to be an election at some point within the next ten months. A general election should be called now and a government and Taoiseach returned with a mandate. The next Taoiseach should be elected by the people. That is the democratic thing to do. Unless you are afraid of the voters.

There is a sense that this Government has run out of steam, ideas, and ambition. Change is in the air. I hope that it lands with the first Sinn Féin government in the

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I wonder what next week will bring?

Have a great weekend.

Is mise,

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

Full Sky News Interview: Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald

Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald discussed the absolute need for a ceasefire in Gaza, the restoration of the Assembly, immigration and Sinn Féin leading change across Ireland in an interview while in Washington, DC. Watch the full interview below.



Sinn Féin Leadership in Washington & New York for St. Patrick's Day meetings

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For nearly a week, hundreds of Irish politicians, artists, and community leaders made Washington, D.C., their home for the annual celebration of the week of St. Patrick's Day.

Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald and Sinn Féin Representative to North America, Ciarán Quinn spent the week meeting with United States congressional Representatives, Senators, members of the State Department, the National Security Council, Labor leaders and many others.

They were joined on the visit by First Minister and Sinn Féin Vice President Michelle O'Neill, and Minister for the Economy, Sinn Féin's Conor Murphy MLA.

It was an historic week as it was the first time a Nationalist First Minister visited the US as a head of state, and it made for many memorable moments.

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Mary Lou McDonald discusses Ireland and Palestine in address at Georgetown

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Sinn Féin Leader Mary Lou McDonald speaking in Georgetown University last week discussed ongoing change in Ireland; including the re-establishment of political institutions in the north, preparations for constitutional change and the urgent needs for a ceasefire in Gaza and the renewal of a peace process to secure Palestinian statehood and a secure Israel.

Ms. McDonald said, “My message from Ireland today is a message of hope, opportunity and optimism. It is a message of reunification, as we work to build a new Ireland as a home for everyone.

“Seismic generational change is underway right across the country. Twenty six years ago the historic Good Friday Agreement was signed. It was an agreement that transcended the past and changed the future for all of us. Today, a new generation – pulsing with ambition, talent and ingenuity – is determined to write the next chapter in Ireland’s story. The most powerful expression of this change is seen in Michelle O’Neill’s election as First Minister, where she leads the Executive alongside DUP Deputy First Minister Emma Little Pengelly.

“Recently, Michelle and Emma visited a childcare facility on the Shankill Road together, and DUP Education Minister Paul Givan visited a Gaelscoil in Dungannon where he did a spot of traditional Irish dancing and said that the Irish language “belongs to all of us”. These small moments are powerful and we shouldn’t miss their significance in shaping the future.

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Michelle O'Neill in Washington, D.C.

"I met with President Biden for the first time on our visit to the U.S, and took the opportunity to urge the President to use his influence to bring about an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

"The genocide of the Palestinian people must end now.

"I will continue to take every opportunity in the United States when meeting with political leaders to press for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the Israeli blockade on humanitarian aid and end their illegal settlements in the West Bank, and for a sovereign Palestinian state."

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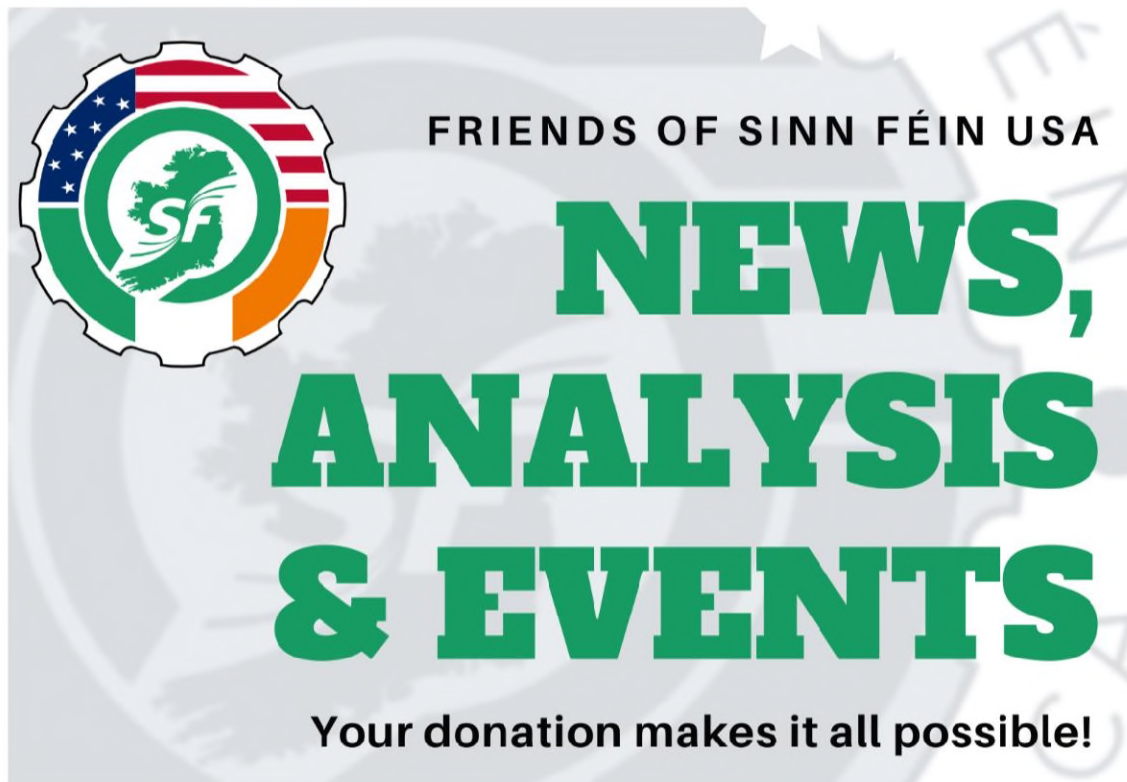
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Irish Unity Summit - Question & Answer

One of the highlights of the Irish Unity Summit was a Question and Answer panel featuring Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald, Ireland's Future founder, Niall Murphy, and Professor Brendan O'Leary. The conversation, moderated by African American Irish Diaspora Network Board Member, Christian Bolden, featured questions submitted by the audience, and covered a wide range of topics. Watch it below, and share with other you think would be interested.

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