

STATEMENT (released 15 February 2020)

Isaac Burke, Kezia Burke, Enoch Burke, Ammi Burke
The Plaintiffs in *Burkes -v- NUI Galway*

This Monday, the 17th of February 2020, the High Court sitting in Cork will hear our appeal of Judge Petria McDonnell's refusal to recuse herself.

It's been eight months now since we sat in Galway Circuit Court, about to open our religious discrimination case, only to have Judge McDonnell describe the proceedings as "moot".

In November 2014 we were banned for life from all student societies at NUI Galway, in what we believe was an act of gross discrimination against us on the grounds of our religious belief, and victimisation.

In June 2019, four and a half years later, just days before our case was due to be heard in court, the University lifted the lifetime ban without any acknowledgement of discrimination or victimisation.

When Counsel for the University Ms Cliona Kimber informed the Court on the 19th of June last year that the ban had been lifted, Judge Petria McDonnell stated that the lifting of the ban "in some ways ... renders the whole hearing moot".

We were shocked and dismayed at this manifestly false statement and asked the Judge to retract it and to apologise for making it.

Judge McDonnell refused to retract or apologise for her statement. She said that she had simply asked a question. This was untrue. We then asked her to recuse herself, but she refused.

In the brief exchanges that followed, Judge Petria McDonnell repeatedly referred to what she had said as a "question".

Again and again she doubled down on her statement that our proceedings were moot, saying at one point: "the one issue has already been conceded".

We appealed her refusal to recuse herself to the High Court, and the hearing of that appeal will take place next Monday, the 17th of February 2020.

This is an extremely important matter – not just for us, in our case, but indeed for everyone who values a fair and impartial judicial system. We all have the right to a fair and impartial hearing. But that right must be protected and preserved.

We are fighting this case, not just for ourselves, but also for you. So please share this video, and spread the news about this important appeal as widely as possible.

As always, thank you for your support. [ENDS]