

Family point to 'glaring flaws' in abuse memoir

By David Sharrock
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THE family of an author who wrote a bestseller about being tortured and raped by Irish priests said that she had been living with them during the years of her alleged ordeal.

Kathy O'Beirne's book *Don't Ever Tell* is a harrowing tale of

savage treatment at the hands of her father, followed by rape by priests, resulting in pregnancy, and whippings by nuns. It has sold 350,000 copies in Britain and Ireland since it was published last year.

However, at a press conference in Dublin yesterday, seven of her brothers and sisters said that she had been the

victim of publishers who had rushed to print her story without checking it.

"As it would have been perfectly clear to anyone who met our sister, there were glaring flaws in her allegations. Mainstream [the publishers] did not carry out the necessary rigorous checks. If they had, this book would never have been published," they said.

Mary O'Beirne, 40, added: "The anger and frustration we feel at seeing our father branded worldwide as a horrific abuser is indescribable. The allegations are untrue against my father. He did think an awful lot of Kathleen.

"If people tell lies for long enough, people will believe it. We all want to get on with our lives and remember our mother and father. They were good to us. I don't want to live the rest of my life like this."

The family added that claims that their sister had been adopted were false.

In the book, O'Beirne says that she suffered abuse during nearly 14 years spent in Magdalene laundries — institutions for "fallen women" run by religious orders. Mary O'Beirne said: "Our sister was not in a Magdalene laundry, or Magdalene home; she was in St Anne's children's home, Kilmacud, St Loman's psychiatric hospital, Mountjoy prison and Sherrard House for homeless people. Our parents placed her in St Anne's for a brief period when she was 11 because of ongoing behavioural difficulties." She spent six weeks there.

She added that between 1968 and 1970, when O'Beirne claims to have suffered the worst of the abuse, she was in fact staying with them.

"This woman has broken our hearts, especially the hearts of our now deceased parents, with her behaviour in the past. Any discipline carried out in our

house was the same as for any family living in the Sixties and Seventies. No better and no worse." She added that her sister did not have a child at the age of 14.

Oliver, Eamon, Mary, Margaret, John, Tommy and Brian O'Beirne signed a statement saying that there was no evidence to support their sister's claims and demanding that the book be withdrawn.

The family said that it had been very difficult to break their silence. They said: "We love our sister and wish to support her in any way we can but we have been left with no other choice than to speak out ...

Our sister has a self-admitted psychiatric and criminal history, and her perception of reality has always been flawed. This has presented great problems for us, her family, our neighbours, and friends.

"Our sister, to our knowledge, was not raped by two priests, and did not receive an out-of-court settlement for the same. There is not a shred of evidence to support such outlandish claims, and we believe our sister was uncooperative with the gardai [Irish police] when such was being investigated last year."

Calling the book's publication "a horrific miscarriage of justice ... in the interests of financial gain", the family said that Mainstream had refused to answer their calls and had gone ahead with the book because "clearly there was too much money to be made".

Mary added: "We are deeply sorry for all of the people who have bought this book believing it to be fact — and we can understand that many people will now feel hurt and conned."

Mainstream said that it had taken steps prior to the publication of *Don't Ever Tell* and was satisfied that the memoir was appropriate for publication.