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Attention: **Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland - with reference to the invitation to suggestions and comments on policing reform in Ireland**

The Institute of Family and Marriage has operated for the past twenty years a Family Integrity and Marriage Reconciliation (FIRM) Self-Help Group for its members.

Members refer their experience to the Institute and we provide them with legal information and the shared experiences of others to help them understand the Law in respect of the Family and parenting.

A recurring theme amongst the members of FIRM is that they have been threatened by members of An Garda Síochána with arrest and indeed many of them have actually been arrested by members of An Garda Síochána where there is no Sworn Information warranting the arrest and where the members of An Garda Síochána claim they are acting on one of the so-called "Family Law" Reform Acts, all of which are Civil Law, enacted in the past fifty years - Guardianship of Infants Act, 1964, Family Home Protection Act, 1976, Family Law (Maintenance of Spouses and Children) Act, 1976, Judicial Separation and Family Law Reform Act, 1989, Family Law Act, 1995, Family Law (Divorce) Act, 1996, Domestic Violence Act, 1996.

No order issued under any of these Acts contains a power of arrest attached to it which would give a member of An Garda Síochána the power to arrest a Spouse.

Powers of arrest are confined to where there is a claim that a person is or has committed an act forbidden by the People which we call a crime where it is claimed that a Criminal Act has been contravened.

The duty of the State in respect of the Family is acknowledged in the Constitution.

The State and its agents including An Garda Síochána must defend and protect the bond of Marriage and the Family thus founded. The State shall not enact any law which would give permission to agents of the State including An Garda Síochána to interfere with the affairs of the Family

The act of threatening to arrest or arresting one of the Spouses in a institution of the Family founded on Marriage by a member of An Garda Síochána on foot of civil legislation under any of the above enactments is not only criminally unlawful but has the intended effect of interfering with the privacy of that Family, skewing the delicate balance of duties and rights that are to be enjoyed within the privacy of the Family and thus destroying all attempts at reconciliation and efforts to restore Family integrity.

We demand that the Policing Authority make it a priority that Garda Policy repudiates such threats or actual arrests of Spouses under cover of "Family Law" by members of An Garda Síochána and instead acknowledges the Law and respects the privacy of the Family so as to allow Family reconciliation to take place.