

Defence Forces

Dáil Éireann Debate, Thursday - 7 May 2026

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Questions (100)

Catherine Callaghan

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Question:

100. **Deputy Catherine Callaghan** asked the **Minister for Defence** for an update on the progress of legislation under the Strategic Framework for the Defence Forces which underpins the appointment and status of military chaplains, including mechanisms for representation by a Defence Forces representative association; and in the absence of such legislation, how protected military chaplains who deploy on overseas service to conflict zones are; who indemnifies them if they are not currently recognised as members of the Defence Forces and have no contract of employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33215/26]

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Minister for Defence

I wish firstly to commend the invaluable contribution made by military chaplains to the Defence Forces. I am in no doubt about the importance of their work in providing pastoral care and maintaining the morale of members of the Permanent Defence Force, especially under difficult and testing conditions when serving abroad.

My officials are currently preparing proposals around the appointment and status of Military Chaplains, which are being informed by a Workplace Relations Commission Ruling from 2023, and a subsequent Defence Forces Chaplaincy Review Report from last year. In addition, I have also asked officials to consider a mechanism to provide for the representation of Chaplains by a Military Representation.

The policy position, once approved, will require appropriate underpinning in primary legislation. I have asked officials therefore to seek advices from the Office of the Attorney General on legislative issues arising.

Meanwhile chaplains are free to join almost any other union or representative association, and as an interim measure, Officials have written to the Head Chaplain to confirm that chaplains may bring any matters of concern directly to my Department.

I wish to assure the Deputy that this body of work, while complex, is a priority for me.

Separately, while Irish Defence Forces Military Chaplains are not armed and they do not perform any operational duties of any kind whether based in the state or overseas, when deployed on active service, including overseas, they are considered persons accompanying the Defence Forces and are subject to military law under the provisions of Section 119d of the Defence Act.

The State Claims Agency (SCA) provides indemnity to State authorities, whose claims are delegated to the SCA for management, such as the Department of Defence, and such claims are managed under the General Indemnity Scheme (GIS).

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