



THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL Seanascal Shaorstát Éireann

Beannacht, Éire.

Just six generations ago, the Irish nation suffered through what was colloquially known as *An Drochshaol*, or “hard times” in English.

In contemporary society, we know this wretched event as An Gorta Mór, or the Great Hunger, where one million Irish people perished from famine. While initially the result of a potato blight, it would be the cruel and colonial ignorance of the crisis that would develop it into a genocide.

The children of Ireland—our would-be cousins, aunts and uncles—had the choice between starving, fleeing or suffering. The effects were not isolated to hunger, either: it was the uprooting of our society and decimation of its stability that would lead to another million to emigrate. Our population has yet to recover to pre-famine levels.

The lasting impact, though, can be best seen abroad. Perhaps it is a point of relief—our nation, while battered by pain at home, was able to paint the world with our culture, values and identity. A small island on the outskirts of Europe has been able to influence the world.

I am thankful that our community, in particular, has been able to reunite so many children of the Diaspora with Irish culture and identity. While perhaps robbed of their natural induction into their heritage, we have surely built bridges to the ports those famine ships docked in.

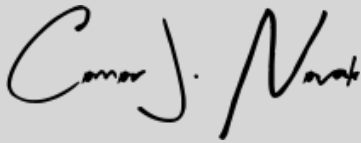
When commemorating this horrible scar on our history, I am most moved to consider Ireland’s global role in the modern day. Truthfully, no one is immune to the happenings of the world in this era of heightened political consciousness. Genocides are still happening, and they are broadcast live on

television and are shared on social media. Ireland must stand in solidarity with those who are crying out for respite.

We cannot stand silent as what happens to us happens to other unfree peoples. We have a duty and a mission to remember our history and prevent its repetition.

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine. Under the shelter of each other, people survive. It is the indomitable spirit of oppressed peoples that ensures their survival, and in particular the solidarity between them. May we thank God for the solidarity shown to us, and ensure we pay it forward when we no longer are in need of it.

Rath Dé ort,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Connor J. Novak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Connor" and last name "Novak" clearly legible.

A Shoilse, Connor_Novak CIOM SGH GCI
An Seanascal Shaorstát Éireann