



## KITTY HOLLAND V JOHN WATERS

THE END game in the seven-year defamation action by *Irish Times* journalist Kitty Holland against ex-IT journalist and anti-abortion activist John Waters is closer, if not completely finalised. Last month Holland secured a judgment against Waters for a sum of €35,000 – the amount awarded to her in the Circuit Court last year following a five-day hearing. Holland was also awarded her costs amounting to €100,000 circa.

Holland broke the story about the death of 34-year-old Savita Halappanavar in University Galway Hospital in 2012. She alleged that Waters had later accused her – without naming her – of lying in her *IT* report and had seriously defamed her. She reported that Ms Halappanavar had been refused a termination because a foetal heartbeat was still present and that she had been told: “This is a Catholic country.”

Waters told the court that Holland was a decent, sincere person but that she had been used by “unscrupulous interests” inside and outside the *IT*.

Judge John O’Connor, however, ruled that the defamation was a serious attack on Holland’s professional integrity as a journalist and caused her great hurt before awarding her €35,000 in damages and later awarding her full costs.

Those costs will have amounted to a multiple of €35,000 given that Holland’s legal team consisted of Lavelle solicitors and a senior and junior counsel. Waters’ team



Kitty Holland

consisted of Brendan Moloney solicitors, along with one senior counsel and two juniors, and is thought to have cost €150,000 circa.

Waters will surely have known of the financial pitfalls involved in defending this case given that he has sued over half a dozen media for defamation – as he stated during Holland’s action against him last year – and was successful in most if not all of them, racking up tens of thousands of euros in the process.

He even sued poor Goldhawk for a report on his legal actions (see *The Phoenix* 30/6/17).

**DONALD TRUMP’S threatening mind games in moving nuclear submarines close to Russia is worrying enough but when two of Britain’s most jingoistic newspapers, the *Sunday Times* and *Mail on Sunday*, point blank disagree about the dangers inherent in this stand-off, it’s even more concerning.**

**The Irish editions of both titles delivered their verdicts to readers last weekend, with the *Mail*’s headline warning: “Nuclear submarines closing in on Russia”. This, it said, was “dramatically escalating tensions between the two countries”.**

**Further Red October-like reportage followed, with the *Mail* saying: “A source close to the President told the MoS: Trump is running out of patience with Russia.”**

**With more menace in each successive paragraph, the *Mail*’s estimation of the Russian threat concluded with the warning: “Military experts said Mr Trump will most likely have deployed two Ohio-class vessels. Each is armed with up to 20 Trident II D5 missiles that can deliver multiple thermonuclear warheads with a range of up to 7,000 miles.” OMG!**

**Over at the equally belligerent ST, defence academic and former Royal United Services Institute director Michael Clarke’s story was headlined: “Duel in deep water: why US doesn’t need to move a single sub”.**

**Clarke wrote: “Whatever Trump’s reasons for the sabre rattling deployment, strategic advantage is not one of them.”**

**He advised Britons that moving two Ohio-class subs closer to Russia would create noise and place them in shallow water, rendering them vulnerable. He ended by saying: “The simple fact remains that these vessels can only perform their deterrent role properly by keeping very quiet, a long way out to sea and deep beneath it.”**

**Which of these two authoritative reports should we take seriously?**

## IIEA ECONOMIC GURU WARNS IRELAND (II)

WITHIN DAYS of the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) chief economist Dan O’Brien having his invitation rescinded to speak to the Oireachtas foreign affairs committee, he has spoken out again on his pet topic – the mortal threat the Occupied Territories Bill (OTB) poses to the Irish economy.

Last month O’Brien was preparing to tell the Oireachtas committee about the OTB’s deadly threat to Ireland when the committee discovered that the IIEA did not have a conclusive position on the OTB and its chief economist was not empowered to present such a position on the IIEA’s behalf.

Thus, O’Brien, who was due before the committee after Alan Shatter’s defence of Israel, did not get to address the TDs and senators (see *The Phoenix* 25/7/25).

But O’Brien, presenting as

“Chief Economist at the Institute for International and European Affairs”, could not be prevented from tweeting most favourably about a *Wall Street Journal* column that vigorously supported the OTB’s threat to the Irish economy. Eugene Kontorovich – under the headline “BDS will be bad for Irish business” – warned that “US anti-boycott laws will put American firms in a tough spot”.

Gleefully seizing on the argument that has effectively become a campaign by US/Israeli interests against the OTB, O’Brien posted on X that the article had not received “the attention it deserves given that the *WSJ* is the paper of record of financial and corporate America”.

A more relevant detail might be the political affiliation and views of the column’s author. Even by Israeli and US standards, he would be regarded as very much on the right of the political spectrum. The *WSJ* describes the academic and writer as a professor at the Antonin Scalia School of Law and senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation. But he is much more than that.

Kontorovich is a founder and activist in the Jerusalem Centre for Security and Foreign Affairs, whose website currently includes two especially strident articles. One advocated that “the US should permanently stop all funding to UNRWA” (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine) – this as children are dying from famine. Another article was headlined: “Finishing the job in Gaza: what it means and what it takes”.

Kontorovich has other interesting affiliations with right-wing Israeli groups but perhaps most tellingly is his residency in recent years in two West Bank settlements. One was in Alon Shvut, an Israeli colony south of Bethlehem, and the other was Neve Daniel, another settlement near Bethlehem.

Is this the sort of Israeli activist that the IIEA chief economist believes Ireland should take advice from?



Dan O'Brien



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