

MEPs call on EU Commission to investigate murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia

Written by Martin Banks and Julie Levy-Abegnoli on 18 October 2017 in News
News

MEPs from across the political divide have demanded a deep and thorough investigation by the Commission into the murder of Maltese investigative reporter Daphne Caruana Galizia.



Maltese flag | *Photo credit: Press Association*

Galizia, one of Malta's most famous journalists, was killed on Monday by a bomb that threw her car into an adjacent field. Galizia's final blog, posted less than an hour before her death, read,

"There are crooks everywhere you look now. The situation is desperate."

She has been described as "a one-woman WikiLeaks, crusading against un-transparency and corruption in Malta."

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Parliament's EPP group leader Manfred Weber said the murder "is tragic proof that the concerns regarding the deteriorating situation in Malta, which the EPP has expressed repeatedly over the past months, were entirely founded.

"It is a dark day for democracy when journalists are being silenced by murder. A free nation and full member of the European Union can and should not allow such shocking events to occur. We ask for a full inquiry."

Galizia was known internationally for her hard stance against corruption and organised crime. She was the local journalist who revealed the Panama Papers scandal that exposed the Maltese Prime Minister's chief of staff and the then-Maltese energy minister's secret companies abroad.

Weber called on the European Commission "to act and make sure that a deep and thorough investigation is conducted on the case" and "that the perpetrators are swiftly brought to justice."

The German MEP added, "We also request an urgent statement by the Commission on intimidation of the press and the protection of media freedom in Malta at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg next week".

Parliament's S&D group leader Gianni Pittella commented, "We strongly condemn this barbaric attack and express our condolences to her family and friends. Many members of our group working on the inquiry committee into the Panama Papers had the opportunity to meet and discuss with Caruana Galizia in Malta. Her unrelenting work as a blogger and an independent journalist to expose corruption was praised by all.

"We stand firmly in support of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We must do all we can to protect whistle-blowers and journalists working to shine a light on wrongdoing."

The Italian deputy insisted that, "Everything possible must now be done to find those responsible for this heinous crime."

Parliament's Panama Papers inquiry committee was due to vote on its final report on Wednesday. Co-rapporteur Petr Ježek said, "It was with utmost grief that I learned about the murder of the

Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who also gave evidence to the PANA committee delegation to Malta and I would like to extend my condolences to her family and the people of Malta.

"Her murder, which must be thoroughly investigated, shows that criminals are prepared to do anything to cover their tracks. I would like to pay tribute to Daphne Caruana Galizia and all investigative journalists who help to reveal corruption and other forms of crime."

His fellow ALDE group member Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz added, "It is possible that the murder of

the Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was committed by those who do not want light to be shed on these dark businesses that move billions of euros around the world. We absolutely need to protect those at risk for unveiling corruption. The social contract and the legitimacy of democracy is at stake.”

Further comment came from German Greens MEP Sven Giegold who has campaigned on the Panama Papers issue and said he was “shocked and saddened,” adding, “Daphne played a vitally important role in unearthing serious allegations of money laundering and corruption in Malta, including those involving senior figures in the Maltese government. It is too early to know the cause of the explosion but we expect to see a thorough investigation. Such incidents bring to mind Putin’s Russia, not the European Union.”

He added, “There can be absolutely no tolerance for violence against the press and violations of the freedom of expression in the EU.”

His sentiments were echoed by Gabi Zimmer, Parliament’s GUE/NGL group leader, who said the journalist “did so much to shed light on corruption through her investigations into the Panama Papers scandal. It is a vicious attack on freedom of speech and democracy.”

“We urgently need a complete and thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding her death so that the forces behind it are exposed and brought to justice,” added Zimmer.

“We, in the European Parliament, owe a lot to all the whistleblowers and journalists, like Galizia, who worked to expose the corruption and money laundering of the Panama Papers scandal. Indeed, as the Parliament’s own investigation into this scandal comes to a head this week, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that the underworld of money laundering, tax fraud, and corruption in our midst is tackled comprehensively,” said Zimmer.

She went on, “Crucial to all this are adequate protections for those journalists who serve the public interest by exposing these networks. Prime Minister Muscat has a particular duty in this regard as he has promised the European Parliament that he would do everything possible in order to have a full investigation and clarification of tax fraud cases.”

Parliament President Antonio Tajani said Galizia “was killed for seeking the truth. I invited her family to plenary next week to join us in paying respect.”

About the author

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