Resolution on the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the rule of law in Malta

2021/2611(RSP) - 29/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 635 votes to 46, with 12 abstentions, a resolution on the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the rule of law in Malta.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, ID, Greens/EFA, ECR, The Left, groups.

The Maltese anti-corruption investigative journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia was assassinated in a car bomb attack on 16 October 2017.

The self-confessed hitman testified in court on 16 March 2021 that two years before Daphne Caruana Galizia was murdered there was a previous and separate plot to assassinate her using an AK-47 rifle.

Members are deeply concerned about the latest revelations in the investigations into the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia, in particular the possible involvement of government ministers and political appointees.

Whilst acknowledging the progress made in the murder investigations, Parliament urged the Maltese Government to deploy all the necessary resources to bring to justice not only every individual implicated in the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, but also those implicated in all other cases currently being investigated or reported which she had brought to light prior to her assassination. It believes that Daphne Caruana Galizia's work has been essential in exposing corruption in Malta and that recent developments on related investigations affirm the paramount importance of an independent media and active civil society as fundamental pillars of justice, democracy and the rule of law.

Parliament also acknowledged the progress made, albeit greatly delayed, in some of the investigations in related cases of money laundering and corruption, particularly with regard to the former Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister. The latest testimonies and revelations have brought new suspicious facts and potential criminal acts to light. The Maltese authorities are urged to launch and advance investigations in these cases without delay, including possible attempts by public officials to conceal evidence and obstruct investigations and judicial proceedings.

All allegations of corruption and fraud, especially at a high political level, should be investigated and prosecuted with the appropriate rigour and at the appropriate level, including in relation to the possible involvement of foreign actors.

The Maltese Government must consider the fight against organised crime, corruption and the intimidation of journalists as of the utmost priority.

Parliament acknowledged that the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia triggered reforms to improve the protection of journalists and defend media freedom. They stressed that the Maltese authorities should take further demonstrable steps, setting long-term legislative and policy measures that serve to ensure an environment for critical, independent journalism in Malta and the accountability of politicians and officials.

Lastly, the Commission is called on to propose EU anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) legislation in order to protect journalists from vexatious lawsuits. Malta should enact

domestic legislation on SLAPP in the meantime. According to Parliament, there is also a need for rapid response mechanisms for violations of press and media freedom, as well as the cross-border investigative journalism fund.