

22 ta' Settembru 2022

Il-Prim Ministru  
Il-Berġa ta' Kastilja  
Il-Belt Valletta

Onorevoli Prim Ministru,

**Dwar: Riforma biex tissaħħaħ il-libertà tal-kelma**

Ahna hawn taħt iffirmati, ġurnalisti membri u mhux membri tal-Istitut tal-Ġurnalisti Maltin, nies li jahdmu fix-xandir, akkademiċi, u persuni li għandhom għal qalbhom id-dritt kostituzzjonali għall-espressjoni hielsa, nesprimu miegħek tħassib serju għall-fatt li hames snin mill-assassinju tal-ġurnalista Daphne Caruana Galizia il-gvern għadu ma fetax għall-konsultazzjoni hielsa u miftuħa l-proposti tiegħu dwar kif se jissaħħaħ il-ġurnaliżmu u dwar x'għandu jsir biex jissaħħaħ id-dritt tal-libertà tal-kelma.

Apprezzajna d-dikjarazzjonijiet pubbliċi tiegħek wara li ntemmet l-inkjesta pubblika indipendenti li hu l-ħsieb tiegħek li timplimenta r-rakkomandazzjonijiet li għamlet.

Apprezzajna meta informajt lill-organizzazzjonijiet internazzjonali li jippromwovu l-libertà tal-espressjoni li għandek il-ħsieb tintroduċi riformi li jipproteġu l-ġurnaliżmu. Konna ddiżappuntati meta nnutajna li rriġutajt kull offerta tagħhom għal assistenza teknika u legali li tirrifletti l-esperjenza tagħhom f'riformi bħal dawn f'pajjiżi oħra.

Apprezzajna meta waqqaft grupp t'esperti li kien jinkludi anke ġurnalisti. Konna ddiżappuntati meta rrealizzajna li żammejt mistura r-rakkomandazzjonijiet tal-grupp minkejja li kont wegħidt li se tippublikahom immedjatament.

Ninsabu infurmati li l-gvern jinsab fi stadju avvanzat ta' thejjija ta' riformi leġislattivi dwar dan is-sugġett. Dan hu tajjeb. Izda hu ħażin li ma sar ebda invit miftuħ mill-gvern għal dialogu hieles dwar x'għandu jkun hemm f'dawn ir-riformi.

Ma nifhmux kif il-libertà tal-espressjoni tista' tithares b'liġijiet li jitfasslu fis-sigriet. Mhux biss. Mingħajr is-sehem attiv tal-membri tal-professjoni u, aktar importanti minnhom, tal-pubbliku, ir-riforma tkun miktuba bil-moħbi u ma tistax tirrifletti l-bżonnijiet tas-soċjetà u allura ma tistax tirnexxi. Mingħajr konsultazzjoni pubblika ma jistax ikollna riforma li tassew tqawwi l-libertà ġurnalistika.

In-nuqqas ta' protezzjoni tal-ġurnalisti, it-tfixkil u l-abbużi li jhabbtu wiċċhom magħhom kull meta, kif inhu xogħolhom, jikxfu l-abbuż tal-poter, huma attakk fuq id-dritt ta' kull cittadin f'soċjetà demokratika li jkun informat dwar l-imġiba ta' dawk li għandhom il-poter. Kull

ċittadin għandu d-dritt li jieħu sehem f'riformi li suppost għandhom l-għan li jipproteġu d-drittijiet fundamentali tiegħu.

Huwa għalhekk li nappellawlek biex immedjatament tippubblika l-pariri li diġà ngħatajt mill-esperti li ħtart u li qabel tmur il-Parlament b'xi proposta ta' liġi, tippubblika l-intenzjonijiet tal-gvern għall-konsultazzjoni pubblika miftuħa u effettiva.

Dejjem tiegħek,

|                         |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Matthew Agius           | Amanda Ciappara         | Jon Mallia            |
| Monique Agius           | Marilyn Clark           | Megan Mallia          |
| Christina Amaira        | Therese Comodini Cachia | Anthony Manduca       |
| Kevin Aquilina          | John Paul Cordina       | Nicole Meilak         |
| Robert Aquilina         | Robert Cremona          | Immanuel Mifsud       |
| Jessica Arena           | Vicki Ann Cremona       | Joseph Mizzi          |
| Charmaine Attard        | Alessandra Dee Crespo   | Caroline Muscat       |
| Andrew Azzopardi        | Pio Dalli               | Gavin Muscat          |
| Peppi Azzopardi         | Elizabeth De Gaetano    | Kevin Papagiorcopulo  |
| Joe Bajada              | James Debono            | Regine Psaila         |
| Nikol Baldacchino       | Julian Delia            | Carmel Said           |
| Jurgen Balzan           | Manuel Delia            | Austin Sammut         |
| James Bianchi           | Tim Diacono             | Kurt Sansone          |
| Steve Bonello           | Ed Dingli               | Georg Sapiano         |
| Julian Bonnici          | Claire Farrugia         | Karl Schembri         |
| Bertrand Borg           | Iggy Fenech             | Kevin Schembri Orland |
| Jacob Borg              | Natalino Fenech         | Mario Schiavone       |
| Joe Borg                | C L Francalanza         | Christoph Schwaiger   |
| Diana Cacciottolo       | Ranier Fsadni           | Roberta Spiteri       |
| Andrew Borg Cardona     | Alexandra Gaglione      | Sebastian Tanti Burlò |
| Carmen Cachia           | Christopher Gatt        | Tina Urso             |
| Paul Cachia             | Gege Gatt               | Louiselle Vassallo    |
| Stephen Calleja         | Gattaldo                | Corinne Vella         |
| Victor Calleja          | A Gauci Cunningham      | Matthew Vella         |
| Mark Camilleri          | Antonio Ghio            | Sasha Vella           |
| Sarah Carabott          | Euchar Gravina          | Victor Vella          |
| Gerard Caruana          | Herman Grech            | George Vital Zammit   |
| Andrew Caruana Galizia  | Noel Grima              | Mark Wood             |
| Matthew Caruana Galizia | Rafel Grima             | Matthew Xuereb        |
| Paul Caruana Galizia    | Chris Gruppetta         | Miguela Xuereb        |
| Peter Caruana Galizia   | Josef Lauri             | Jacques René Zammit   |
| Kevin Cassar            | Mary Anne Lauri         | Pia Zammit            |
| Arnold Cassola          | David Lindsay           | Darrin Zammit Lupi    |
| Lydia Cecil             | Giulia Magri            |                       |
| Kristina Chetcuti       | Görg Mallia             |                       |

COURTESY TRANSLATION

22 September 2022

The Prime Minister,  
Auberge de Castile  
Valletta

Dear Prime Minister,

**Re: Reforms to strengthen freedom of expression**

We the undersigned, journalists who are members or non-members of the Institute of Maltese Journalists, people who work in broadcasting, academics, and people who value the constitutional right to freedom of expression, express to you our serious concern that, five years after the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia, the government has not subjected to free and open consultation its proposals to strengthen journalism and freedom of expression.

We appreciated your public declarations, following the closure of the independent public inquiry, that you intended to implement its recommendations.

We appreciated your informing international free expression organisations that you intended to introduce reforms to protect journalism. We were disappointed when we noted that you refused all their offers of technical and legal assistance that reflects their experience on similar reforms in other countries.

We appreciated your appointing a committee of experts which included journalists. We were disappointed when we realised that you did not publish the committee's recommendations despite your promise to publish them immediately.

We are informed that the government is at an advanced stage of preparing legal reforms on this subject. This is good. However, it is wrong that the government has not invited free and open dialogue about what these reforms should include.

We do not understand how freedom of expression can be safeguarded by laws that are drafted in secret. Furthermore, without the active participation of members of the profession and, more importantly, of the public, the reforms will be drafted covertly and will not reflect the needs of society and, therefore, they cannot succeed. Without public consultation, we cannot have reforms that truly strengthen journalistic freedom.

The absence of protection of journalists, the interference and abuses they face whenever, as is their role, they expose the abuse of power, are, above all, an attack on the right of every citizen in a democratic society to be informed about the behaviour of those in power. Every citizen has the right to participate in reforms which, supposedly, are aimed at protecting their fundamental rights.

This is why we ask you to immediately publish the advice you have already received from the experts whom you appointed and, before you present any legal proposals to Parliament, to publish the government's intentions for open and effective public consultation.

Yours faithfully,