
MALTESE STAGE SECOND RALLY FOR MURDERED JOURNALIST CARUANA GALIZIA

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A second protest on Malta has drawn many thousands demanding justice for murdered journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. Organizers again demanded the resignations of the EU nation's top prosecution and police officials.

On Sunday, demonstrators streamed through Malta's beach haven Sliema - across the bay from its capital Valletta - protesting authorities of downplaying the investigative journalist's murder and failing to uphold conditions that would have safeguarded her.

Organizers said 10,000 people took part to express anger over alleged failings of the government and opposition alike.

Caruana Galizia, 53, was killed outside her rural home at Bidnija in northern Malta on October 16 by a bomb planted inside or under her rented car.

It was the sixth car bombing in Malta in two years. None have been solved.

'The people are waiting'

Protestors carried banners in predominantly English-speaking Sliema, declaring that the EU island nation "deserved better governance and "we will not be silenced and "no justice without change.

Some demonstrators had their mouths sealed with red tape. Many also wore bay laurel leaves as symbols of courage and strength.

In a speech read by a friend, blogger Jacques Zammit said Caruana Galizia's family wanted to see rule of law and democracy restored to the EU island nation of 430,000 people rocked by corruption allegations.

As at previous rallies, the organizers of Sunday's demonstration demanded that Malta's Police Commissioner Lawrence Cutajar and Attorney General Peter Grech resign and be replaced by substitutes elected by two-thirds of Malta's parliament.

"The people are waiting, said an organizing group calling itself the Civil Society Network.

The newspaper Malta Today said protesters demanded constitutional reform and slammed authorities for tolerating a "culture of impunity" that allegedly contributed to Caruana Galizia's death.

No suspects identified

So far investigators, including those from the American FBI, Europol and Dutch forensic experts, had not identified suspects.

On Saturday, the Times of Malta newspaper quoted sources as saying the foreign investigators were "working well with Maltese police and that the journalist's remains had been released for burial by her family.

"Tests are also being done on cigarette butts found at the site where a "suspicious car was seen at the time of the explosion, the newspaper said.

Caruana Galizia's funeral was expected next Friday, without state involvement, it said.

Her killing, which prompted a large protest in Valetta a week ago, put increased focus on Malta's political elite, including Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and opposition leader Adrian Delia.

Attorney general defended

Defending Malta's attorney general's office in parliament on October 21, Justice Minister Owen Bonnici asserted that Grech's bureau was independent and enjoyed the trust of Maltese citizens.

Opposition justice spokesman Jason Azzopardi said Malta in the past two years had dropped 14 places in a World Economic Forum ranking on judicial independence to 51st slot among 137 countries.

On confidence in police, its ranking had fallen 18 places, Azzopardi added.

The Times of Malta on Saturday quoted counsel for a sacked Maltese Financial Services Unit investigator as claiming that Grech had tried to expunge testimony ahead of an unfair dismissal hearing on the grounds that it breach national security.

ipj/kl (AFP, Reuters, dpa)

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