

Threats faced by Daphne Caruana Galizia and the Effects on her life and her family

1. On the 6th October 2017, barely five weeks before she was assassinated, Daphne Caruana Galizia was interviewed by Marilyn Clarke from the Council of Europe¹. The interviewer wanted to know how Daphne Caruana Galizia felt she was treated in her work as a journalist. The best way through which this Board of Public Inquiry may establish the environment within which Daphne Caruana Galizia worked as a journalist and grasp an understanding of the intimidation and threats she faced is precisely by taking into account her own words.

2. Daphne Caruana Galizia describes the environment in which she published as one in which she was made the national scapegoat. She uses the following words:

(i) *“So, it’s, when you look at my story, it’s a classic, classic case of scapegoating on a national, nation-wide scale. So, obviously, when you have the scapegoat, there’s an entity which is doing the scapegoating and encouraging others to scapegoat. And in my case, that became the labour party which was in opposition for many years but now has become more dangerous because labour party is actually in government and so has a lot more power. But all the problems, leaving aside the attended problems, like abuse of power in my regard, and so on; all the problems, the greatest difficulties I encounter, come from the fact that they have made me into what in effect is a national scapegoat. And this has gone on for thirty years now almost.”*

3. She continues:

(i) *“I am in a situation where people who can’t even read English and therefore, have never read anything I’ve written, at the same time are aware of who I am, know that they are meant to hate me, or dislike me, or despise me, or disagree with me, or whatever, and react to me on that basis. Totally irrespective of what I write but as the person, as the figure that they are told to hate. So, this has become a massive, massive problem and I have had cases, especially when the incitement is really high at times of political tension, where I have had problems even with people in the street ...”*

¹ Full interview recording and transcript of interview was presented in the acts of the inquiry; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/-/last-interview-with-daphne-caruana-galizia-published-on-third-anniversary-of-her-death>

4. Daphne Caruana Galizia, the journalist and the woman, was made to feel that people despised and hated her as the person, not her published work. She considered political discourse in her regard as *'incitement'* that took place not only at times of high political tension. She narrates how she was frightened when a car blocked her in the hospital carpark just as she had spent the day in hospital with her mother. She recalls that this was when *"My face had just been up on all the labour party billboards all-round the island where they put me up in the same group as the Prime Minister, senior politicians and I was totally the fish out of water; but I was there with these politicians, so I became instantly recognisable, even to people. And there was this car blocking. I mean it was a really intense situation and umm this car was just blocking me, and I reversed out and this guy started shouting and blowing the horn and whatever and umm he went to file a report saying that I reversed into him which wasn't true at all."*
5. She highlights the lack of training of the police and the lack of police structures which understand the position of journalists when she says: *"The police then did a conspiracy because they happened to be supporters of the government or whatever. Took me up to Court, it was headlines in all the papers. I mean it was awful. And when it came down to the crunch, the Magistrate said. I mean, she said, "She had no marks on her car, the police themselves confirmed this, she still had dried mud on her... jigifieri even the dried mud wasn't disturbed and it's quite obvious that you conspired with the police for this whole thing". And she just let me off. And I said, "Okay, I was let off but meanwhile I was put through this mill and the headlines and everything."*
6. Daphne Caruana Galizia also confirms that polarization was also present in the way people treated her when she confirms she became *'a folk hero or an enemy.'*
7. She does not only highlight the disabling politically polarized environment she had to continuously strive through, but also reflects on how her being a woman expressing her opinion in a newspaper column which named her and published her photo also exposed her to public scrutiny. The scrutiny of herself as a woman authoring a newspaper column was initially the scrutiny that she was socially subjected to already exposing her to scrutiny of her own person rather than her work.
8. Daphne Caruana Galizia draws an important difference, which is also of relevance to this inquiry, between harassment and interference. In this interview she states *"I experience a lot of harassment. Umm in the past I had interference*

because I had editors. ...” She continues to describe attempts at shutting her up and narrates that having experienced being sacked from the newspaper she thought a blog would be her fall back position, thinking “*Now, nobody can say – we’re gonna shut her up!*” *Because before that ‘shutting me up’ constituted putting pressure on my directors to sack me and they’re still doing it to this day, you know? Trying to get me to lose my column at ‘The Independent’ by saying, ‘We won’t give you government advertising because you’ve got her on board.’* She speaks of ‘*blatant abuses where they make it clear that umm, that the newspaper is not getting government advertising because they’ve got me on board. ...*’ She speaks of the government’s attempt at intimidating her financially by ‘*they just want, umm to reduce my income because, I’m paid by ‘The Independent’, you see? So they want to close off all avenues to me. And they even ha-harass people who work closely with me. ...*”

9. Daphne Caruana Galizia elaborates further on economic harassment which goes beyond her losing income from The Independent and refers to her income from advertising on Running Commentary. She explains that businesses recognize their audience as being their target customer base yet they ‘*are afraid*’ to advertise ‘*because they think they would get retribution from the government, who supports the old government or that supporters of the government would boycott their product or their shop.*’ She defines the impact of this on her as “*It makes life a real struggle. ... But because of this scapegoating issue ... It’s classic scapegoating, you know, umm, punish her, don’t whatever, isolate her, I mean. It’s all like a systematic attempt to isolate me and cut me off from everybody else.*”
10. Glen Bedingfield’s blog was also discussed in this interview. Daphne Caruana Galizia indicates that she had complained of this to the OSCE. She describes Bedingfield’s blog as ‘*the instrument of government targeting*’ which was systematic. She describes how she was harassed by persons who were closely connected to the Labour Party. Such harassment took its toll and also brought about changes in her daily habits. She gave up going to the beach after ‘*this group Sharon Ellul Bonici, Ignatious Farrugia, whatever, following me around taking photos of me and uploading me on Facebook. I said, “Forget it, I’m not going to the beach anymore, you know?”*’
11. Daphne Caruana Galizia recognised that the ‘*biggest-biggest negative impact it has, leaving aside the impact it has on me, ... But my biggest concern is that because people see what happened to me, they don’t want to do it. It’s scared others off! So, people keep asking, “Why is there only one of her?”*’ And the only

reason, there's one of her is not because I do something unique or wonderful or my abilities are super special because there are loads of people, especially in the younger generation ..." She continues to explain that *'People are scared because they see me under constant attack. They see what my life is like and they say, "No way!"'*

12. The interview also considers judicial intimidation. She speaks of the use of precautionary warrants demanded by the then Minister Chris Cardona against her and explains how even when the government stated it would change the law so that such warrants would not be used against journalists, the government had used the Department of Information to publish a press statement to continue scapegoating her in which Cardona said *'he agrees with removing precautionary warrants for journalists but makes an exception in my case back to what we were talking about, scapegoating, because I am not the same as other people. I am evil!'* Caruana Galizia also recognizes that despite this political rhetoric in the end *'they didn't change the law as they promised they would.'*
13. Addressing the issue of libel proceedings instituted by persons in public life, Daphne Caruana Galizia describes this as *'a public relations reaction.'* She highlights the fact that under Maltese law one could institute a libel procedure for every publication even if the subject matter was connected. She refers to the five libel suits presented against her by Adrian Delia on different blog posts referring to the same subject matter, and she also refers to the nineteen libel suits presented by Silvio Debono. She describes the former as being a case of public relations reaction, but she saw the latter as being a case of direct harassment indicating that the plaintiff had himself intimidated as much when he told her *"Għax jien għandi hafna flus u nista nagħmel, you know, dsatax-il kawza."* She identifies this situation as placing journalists in Malta at the mercy of those on whom they write and agrees that this creates a climate of fear.
14. The interview also discusses psychological violence. When asked how this happened in her regard, Daphne Caruana Galizia replied in the following manner:

"Well, that is constant with me and it is absolutely terrible. And there have been periods where literally I would feel like, oh my god, I'm going to get a stomach ulcer. That churning, churning nerves all the time. Because you're living under it constantly, you know? And it was bad enough, as I said, when Labour party was in opposition but now they're in government. Now, they have access to all my private information, everything, you know, at the push of a button. And umm,

I think the worst part of it, this is why I make the distinction, the political distinction, because the Nationalist party in government also had access to that information. It also had the journalists that it didn't like and whatever, but I can't imagine ever in a million years that anybody who was in government crossed the line and used any information about any journalist abusively or used it to threaten them or whatever.

Interviewer: *But you feel that this is happening now?*

Daphne Caruana Galizia: *Of course, it's happening!*

Interviewer: *And to you personally.*

Daphne Caruana Galizia: *They have absolutely no red lines. For them-for them, and I say 'them' advisedly, umm they- any information they have access to is all fair-all's fair in love and war and there are absolutely no boundaries. They can call up anything about anybody, even your children's exam results. I'll give you one example, which is, it's really shocking.*

Interviewer: *This is a state of surveillance essentially."*

15. Daphne Caruana Galizia also spoke of 'acts of aggression' which she distinguished from the smear campaign which she experienced 'All the time, all the time, all the time, all the time.' She states 'that one of the most aggressive tools which the labour party and the government tries to use against me which is the one of social ostracism and alienation ..' She refers to her being repeatedly called a 'witch' and she expresses concern that while this smear campaign does not stop her work it does affect others. She states 'And I'm quite again, I am quite sure that I am one of the reasons why there aren't more women in public life. I'm quite sure because earlier, earlier on, I used to literally get a lot of correspondence from younger women, or women saying, "You know, you're really good role model, umm you know, you really encourage me to whatever." And I think, okay, the flip side of that is that they probably see what's happening to me as well, and they might not want to have to deal with that.'
16. Daphne Caruana Galizia claims in this interview that 'a climate of fear' surrounded journalism in Malta inducing not only journalists to self-censorship but also negatively affecting their sources who were in turn afraid of consequences should they speak up as well as 'anybody who is required to speak openly', indicating that 'It has become very difficult, for example, for journalists

to get comments from people.” She explicitly states that real journalism had become very difficult. She agrees with the interviewer that the intimidation was filtering down even to people who are sources and Daphne Caruana Galizia states “*Yes, its filtering down and there’s been a clear change over the last four years where people are actually scared.*”

17. Harassment and intimidation towards Daphne Caruana Galizia included receiving ‘*shit in envelopes through the post.*’, ‘*poison pen letters*’, ‘*harassing phone calls*’ and “*one of the things I used to worry about most was that they used to phone home blaspheming, saying all kinds of things and the children used to pick up the phone, you know. They used to pick up the phone and they used to hear this string of blasphemy at the other end. That was top.*” Harassment on traditional mediums moved to harassment online with Daphne Caruana Galizia being harassed on social media.
18. The harassment and intimidation that Daphne Caruana Galizia experienced also left its effects on her family. Testimony of her sons, husband, sisters and parents also expresses the constant attacks on Daphne Caruana Galizia as a person as opposed to criticism of her work. Her family narrate the ongoing attacks on Daphne Caruana Galizia which long before her assassination, these attacks had dehumanized her and sanctioned actions being taken by government officials or persons closely connected to the government and to the party in government.
19. Her mother’s testimony clearly shows the constant anxiety which her parents experienced as a direct consequence of Daphne Caruana Galizia being a journalist. Her mother states that she was constantly concerned that her daughter might suffer a physical violent attack. Her father testified that ‘*All of those ‘weapons’ were directed against my daughter Daphne, at different times, in a bid to stop her from holding government under scrutiny.*” The weapons he was referring to were ‘*The suppression of free speech and the denial of the people’s right to know, as also the use of the police and the regulatory structure in general as tools to harass, and to wear down, any individual or organization the party perceived as being in conflict with the attainment of its objectives.*”
20. He refers to the killing of her dogs and the arson attack on her home as having been ‘*a constant source of worry*’, but his perception of threat against her ‘*became more acute when Labour came to power in 2013*’ and when there was a succession of Police Commissioners being appointed. Her father perceived that the ‘*level of threat escalated further when she published her findings resulting from the Panama Papers naming high ranking persons in government as owners*

of a text-book money laundering structure of shell companies in Panama and in New Zealand.” The only support that her father felt Daphne Caruana Galizia had was her ‘wide readership, both local and international, and the existence at the time of an Opposition worthy of its name that was also able to rally public awareness and support as to the seriousness of her revelations.’ With this ‘line of protection’ neutralized, Mr Vella’s concern for his daughter’s safety increased.

21. He saw the public denigration of Daphne Caruana Galizia by the then newly elected Nationalist Party leader combined with the government’s constant attacks on his daughter as leaving her *‘alone and defenseless, in a climate of impunity and in the face of a hostile state.’* Mr Vella felt that the state authorities had failed to act on his daughter’s reports on corruption and had *‘consistently failed to acknowledge the consequent escalating level of threat to Daphne and completely failed to take any action to ensure her safety.’*
22. Her sister Corinne Vella testified on the process which Daphne Caruana Galizia went through, a process wherein *“At first, a journalist is discredited and delegitimized, isolated, then assassinated and his or her legacy and memory are annihilated.”* She describes how her sister had columns written about her and was the subject of reports on radio, TV and newspapers owned by the Labour Party. She explains how she saw her sister being dehumanized through measures of character assassination where she was labelled as a *‘propagandist’* and a *‘hate blogger’, as a purveyor of gossip and fake news, not as a human but as inhuman, as a witch and as a legitimate target for hatred and suspicion.”*
23. Her son Andrew Caruana Galizia states that his mother *‘viewed her arrest on the night of the ‘Day of Silence’ for example in March 2013 on the basis of a report by a Labour Party official as a message that not only can she expect not to receive any protection from the state but that the state was now under the control of people who wished to have her silenced.’*² He continues to say that *‘Following the 2013 elections, the government’s main strategy to curb my mother’s influence on the public was a continuation of the Labour Party’s strategy, except that many of the same people leading this work before were placed on the public payroll; people like Kurt Farrugia and Glen Bedingfield.’*³ And he describes ‘criminal propaganda’ as being that action which is incessant, consistent and powerful to create a real and immediate risk to his mother. This type of propaganda was *‘so powerful that people celebrated her assassination.’*

² Page 8, Andrew Caruana Galizia, testimony of 27 December 2019

³ Ibid

24. Andrew Caruana Galizia indicates that the material threats that affected his mother's life escalated with legal threats and also the termination of his own posting in New Delhi. However there was a marked escalation when his mother's work exposed information related to government officials in the Panama Papers, government corrupt schemes and corruption allegations in government projects. He states that for at least a year and a half before her death she left the house only when it was absolutely necessary.
25. Her husband, Peter Caruana Galizia, gives account of the different instances of harassment and threats which his wife and the family received over the years. He indicates that they had suffered two arson attacks at their house, they had found their dog knifed and that they were continuously harassed when they were in public.
26. He describes as a '*turning point iehor li affettwat il-hajja taghna b'mod tremend kien li meta l-Partit Laburista fil-kampanja ta' l-elezzjoni tat-2013 kienu ghamluha fuq billboard enormi fin-nofs bejn Austin Gatt, Lawrence Gonzi u mbaghad fil-gemb kien hemm Richard Cachia Caruana, kien hemm Paul Borg Olivier u kien hemm George Pullicino.*'⁴ He continues to indicate that following that billboard Daphne Caruana Galizia became easily identified by the public and that wherever they were '*f'daqqa wahda xi hadd jibda jghajjarha, kienu jobsqulha, kienu I mean kienet saret intollerabbli l-hajja.*' He continues to indicate that when she was still driving her car she would be out and she would find slashed tyres, punctures, scratches on the car and other damage. He states that this was part of the process of dehumanization that was targeted at her and which rendered her as an object rather than a person. This exposed her to persons who would '*jghajruha bhala object of hatred, u bil-mod il-mod bdiet tissejjah ukoll is-sahhara tal-Bidnija.*'⁵

⁴ Page 5, Peter Caruana Galizia, testimony of 6 December 2019

⁵ Page 7, Peter Caruana Galizia, testimony of 6 December 2019