

L-Atti tal-Inkjesta datata 19 ta' Novembru 2019, rigward skont it-Termini ta' Referenza ta' l-Inkjesta Pubblika dwar l-Assassinju ta' Daphne Caruana Galizia.

Seduta miżmuma llum it-Tlieta 10 ta' Diċembru, 2019 fis-02:00 p.m. fit-Tieni Sular, Awla 20, il-Qorti.

Judge Michael Mallia :

To say the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth so help you God.

The Witness :

I do.

Megan Mallia daughter of Pierre and Mangan nee` Vella born in Pierta` and residing in Kappara states on oath in the English language.

The Witness :

I am Megan Mallia, Daphne Caruana Galizia's niece. Into the interest of the public inquiry into her assassination, I wish to share how my life has been impacted by the way the state and consequently society treated my aunt even before her murder. Because particular events became a normal part of life, however, I do not remember everything and these are just some points.

Sometime in 2011, while my family and I where marching in a protest against Libyan dictator Gaddafi, members of an activist group followed Daphne with posters of Maltese politicians, which felts me like harassment. My mother and aunts tried to get us to move away.

Another time, a couple of years later, I spent a few days in hospital. My aunt Daphne could not come to visit me. I cannot remember the explanation my mother gave me, but I do remember thinking that it had much to do with the reaction Daphne's presence might cause among the patients sharing my ward, and the doctors and nurses in whose hands my healthcare was.

2013 was also the year my aunt was arrested for writing on the night before the election. My sister an I, 10 and 12 years old respectively at that time, sent her an email which our mother published on facebook with our consent. I remember our mother telling us how people were messaging her after seeing the email to say how children should not get involved.

In 2016, my family and I were taking Daphne's dog for a walk in Sliema, when we were stopped by officials of the Animal Welfare Department. They wanted to know if the dog was chipped. We had no idea. We said he wasn't ours but belonged to a relative. They asked for the owner's name. We did not want to give Daphne's name out of fear what might happen if her dog was for some reason not microchipped. One of my aunts only gave it when she had managed to call Daphne and confirmed that her dog was microchipped, but even then, she said Daphne's name in a whisper.

At school, nearing the general election of June 2015? (2017), my peers began saying that my aunt was a liar, a mantra started by state officials. Every day I was bombarded with the same questions and accusations; 'where's the proof of what you aunt is saying?', 'what does she get out of it?', 'who pays her to write?'. These increased a tenfold the day before the election. It became frustrating and I had nobody apart from my family to speak to. I remember going for some quiet in the library, and messaging Daphne about it.

The day of the general election in 2017, my mother, father, sister and I were so nervous that we were losing our tempers easily. I did not know that would happen to Malta if the Labour Party remained in government, and I feared for Daphne. My mother was in the room next to mine, feeling sick with tension. I looked outside, and our neighbours had guests arriving at their door in party outfits, champagne in hand, which did not make sense because the result had not yet been confirmed. Then my mother, in a croaky voice, gave us the news. I felt the blood drain from my face and anger pounded through every vein in my body.

I always remember that when Daphne visited us at home, my mother would walk out with her to her car, particularly if it was dark. In 2017, Daphne only visited a couple of times and I felt worry growing with my mother when she did. She made sure to walk with her to her car even then – especially then.

In the first week of October 2017, I was visiting a friend at hospital with another friend. A boy he knew from his previous school joined us. The conversation swayed to Maltese politics, and suddenly this boy piped up my aunt's name in a disgusted tone. Mispronouncing her surname seemingly intentionally. 'You mean Daphne Caruana Galizia, my aunt', I said. He turned to me. 'Do me a favour then', he said. 'Go and ask your aunt why she made up all those Panama Papers stories.' I remember calmly saying that she did not write lies, that she was a journalist and she was risking so much. Just a few days later, my aunt was assassinated, and that boy had the cheek to send his condolences through our common friend just an hour after.

One day in the summer of 2018, I was at the protest site with my mother, aunt and grandparents. My grandfather was trying to hang a photograph of Daphne on the hoarding placed around the Great Siege Memorial, where the protest site is. My grandmother said that she noticed a man taking photos of us nearby and thought him a tourist. Suddenly, that man stormed up to us, snatching the bouquet of flowers we had just placed. He wrestled with my grandfather – Daphne’s father – trying to rip the photo of Daphne out of his hand. A young girl accompanying the man joined in. My aunt and I insisted to my grandparents that we should move off and just ignore them. I remember the passionate fury of the man, how the veins in his neck swelled as he screamed at us, and how he strode off waving the bouquet above his head after throwing Daphne’s photo in the bin. Not long after, photos of us were shared on a Labour Party supporter facebook group, tagged with the words ‘name and shame’. A woman who had lived opposite my grandparents for around two decades identified us in a comment under the post.

A week before the second anniversary of my aunt’s assassination, I was speaking to a group of people in my university course who I was just getting to know. One of them said she wanted to be an investigative journalist. Without a beat, she added ‘forsi insir sploduta wkoll’. (The Maltese translation of ‘maybe I will be blown up as well’) and cackled loudly. In that moment I felt the blood drain from my face in anger, frustration and disgust. I walked away without a word and strode blindly past curious stares with tears running down my face. My lecture was due to start a few minutes later, so I had no choice but to collect myself before entering the class. This sick humour and ignorance has become something I am learning to deal with, but it is ubiquitous in Maltese society.

I found out that the girl was a member of a Labour Party youth group. Some months later, she caught me off guard on campus with what sounded much like a long-thought out speech that was meant to be apologetic. Her words were all things I had heard before from state propaganda, that the government had put out a monetary reward for any information, that three men were in court. Day in, day out, she sat in front of me in class with a photograph of Joseph Muscat and herself on her desktop. It felt to me as if she chose her seat purposely so that I would see it.

A few months ago, I was in the departure lounge at the airport, walking through the narrow corridor leading out of the bathrooms. A man was walking towards me, and just before he went past, his eyes snapped onto mine. What I remember is feeling shock take hold, my head whipping round to look at him passing me in disbelief, to see my mother, who was walking behind me,

freeze. I recognized that man from his cold eyes. Keith Schembri, the man who it has now come to light was involved in my aunt's assassination. My mother and I walked through the lounge disbelieving. That man, in a t-shirt and jeans, walking freely through an airport corridor right past us. I had always felt that if it had not been for him and his corruption, my aunt would still be alive. My mother and I fell into each other's arms and burst into tears in the middle of the bustling crowds.

When my aunt was alive, as I have said, abnormality from others behaviour and comments about her became the norm for me. The news of another libel suit filed by a politician or businessman, and eventually the news that Daphne's assets were frozen by a minister, were terrible but not a surprise. Her assassination was a shock to me but not a surprise either. It felt like I had lived knowing that one day corruption would go as far as to kill her.

I just never imagined the aftermath. Since my aunt's assassination, I like the rest of my family, have had no time to grieve. On a daily basis we are combating state propaganda and troll armies. People online have told me to dig a hole next to my aunt's grave and lie in it. Others are kinder and call me a bitch or a liar. Outside, people who recognise me from news articles and were taught to hate Daphne from years of propaganda murmur under their breath and stare because I am her niece. This is the climate that allowed for her to be murdered and be vilified even in death, and for our family it become objects of hate.

Din hija s-sustanza tax-xhieda ta' **Megan Mallia** dettata minnha stess fil-prezenza ta' l-istess xhud.

Niddikjara li traskrivejt bl-ahjar hila tieghi x-xhieda ta' l-istess xhud.

Saviour Scicluna
Traskrittur