



Ms.Sarah Clarke
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UK

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, CULTURE
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
OLD TREASURY STREET, VALLETTA, MALTA

22nd October 2018

Dear Ms. Clarke,

Thank you for your letter of the 19 October.

Your organisation is calling upon me to ensure “that the peaceful protest monument remains as long as people wish to honour the memory of, and call for justice for, Daphne Caruana Galizia.”

The matter has been raised during the very cordial meeting that you and your colleagues had with us last week. As we have explained during our meeting, that what is called the “peaceful protest monument” has been established on one of the most important national monuments of the country which is situated in the centre of the capital city to affirm the country’s historical identity and its resistance to attempted invasion in the battle of the Great Siege, when the Ottomans tried to invade Malta.

As Minister responsible for national monuments I exercise the utmost degree of tolerance and understanding for the temporary use at any time of the monument for the purpose of the free expression of ideas, including of course tribute to Daphne Caruana Galizia. As was explained during our meeting, the makeshift memorial was there for months and created also considerable tension among the public. So much so that a number of unknown individuals were behind the removal of the memorial. At times it has also created clashes among individuals who wanted to honour the memory of Caruana Galizia and other citizens who would feel offended by the makeshift memorial.

As I had the opportunity to explain during our meeting, as a Government we need to balance between the need for those who want to honour Caruana Galizia, as well as of those who feel offended that a national monument is permanently taken over and converted for purposes totally different from those for which they were put up and paid for by the Maltese public as a whole. Unfortunately, the monument was also damaged because of the materials that were being placed against it.

I therefore disagree with you that the clearing of the flowers, candles photos and messages placed on the Great Siege Monument at a political gathering to mark the first anniversary of Ms. Caruana Galizia’s murder and their subsequent deposit in Court constitutes a breach of the right to freedom of expression even if that clearing took place almost two days after the activity had ended.

You may also be aware that the same issue that you raise in your letter is currently the subject of a court case before the Maltese courts in their Constitutional jurisdiction. In such circumstances I feel that the rule of law requires that it is the courts that in any case should decide the issue.

While reminding you that, as you have yourself witnessed, peaceful protests in Malta are something that are tolerated as in any other modern democracy, one must also respect that this delicate issue must be handled carefully in order to maintain a degree of balance not to cause more polarisation and tension among society.

As we have assured you during our meeting, we are committed to bring to justice all those behind this shocking murder which is affront to Malta and all that we as a society believe in.

Best regards



Owen Bonnici
Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government