



L-Onor. Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici  
Il-Ministru tal-Ġustizzja u l-Intern,  
Auberge d' Aragon  
Pjazza Indipendenza  
Valletta VLT 2000

18 March 2010

Grupp 29  
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Honorable Minister,

We are writing in connection with the criminal proceedings that have just been instituted by the police against the author Alex Vella Gera, in relation to the short story that he published in the journal *Ir-Realtà*. This follows in the footsteps of similar actions the police have taken against Mark Camilleri, the editor of this publication.

In spite of the wave of public protest that Mr Camilleri's case has provoked on the part of the country's artistic and cultural communities, as well as the media, we are dismayed to see that the police have not only pursued their absurd case against him, but have now extended the scope of their repressive actions to include the author himself.

It is our contention, both as authors and as Maltese and European citizens, that this constitutes a direct assault on the part of the institutions of the State on our artistic freedom and our freedom of expression. Such actions place our country in the same league as anti-democratic and intollerant regimes, which over the years have garnered a reputation for repressing freedom of thought and expression, whether they use violent means to do so or rely on legal arguments to justify their actions. There is no doubt that such actions constitute a violation of both the letter and the spirit of the fundamental obligations that our country, in defining itself as a modern, European nation, has undertaken to honour.

We insist that, as the minister who is politically in charge of the police force and the laws that regulate their actions, it is within your remit, as well as your duty, to halt these criminal proceedings and to guarantee that they never be used against authors and artists again, thereby putting a stop to the criminalisation of art and literature. It is also necessary to update the laws that define obscenity and how it is regulated. No argument that rests on an appeal to the law can diminish your responsibility in all of this. With every day that passes without a decisive intervention on your part, your responsibility and that of the whole administration increases, as does the threat to our civil liberties.

While continuing to hope for immediate action on your part, we remain,

Yours sincerely,

**Grupp 29**

***Grupp 29 is made of 90 authors, artists and people working in culture. Its central animators are: Clare Azzopardi, Mario Azzopardi, Charles Flores, Albert Gatt, Adrian Grima, Sergio Grech, Maria Grech Ganado, Ġorġ Mallia, Albert Marshall, Caldon Mercieca, Immanuel Mifsud and Karl Schembri***

CC: The Prime Minister  
Opposition Spokesman for Justice and Home Affairs  
Leader of the Opposition  
European Commissioner for Justice  
The Police Commissioner  
Maltese MEPs  
Media  
Statewatch