



PRESS RELEASE

18 March, 2010

'Stop the criminalisation of art' – Maltese authors and artists to government

The Maltese community of authors, artists and people working in the cultural field today called on the ministers of justice and culture to assume their political responsibility and stop the absurd criminal proceedings being taken against editor Mark Camilleri and author Alex Vella Gera.

In letters of protest sent to Minister of Justice and Home Affairs Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, and Parliamentary Secretary for Culture Mario de Marco, Grupp29 – which unites 90 authors, artists and cultural workers - stressed that the two government members are politically responsible for the persecution of the author and editor, and for the direct assault on freedom of expression and artistic freedom.

“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,” Grupp29 said.

“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.”

The group also appealed to the justice minister and the parliamentary secretary, in their respective remits, to abolish censorship of the arts, to update laws defining obscenity and to stop the criminalisation of art, as is required of a country that defines itself as modern and European, in line the fundamental obligations that our country has undertaken to honour.

Copies of the letter have also been sent to the European Commission, NGOs for civil rights, MEPs and the Opposition.

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Background:

Criminal charges filed against Realtà story author

<http://di-ve.com/Default.aspx?ID=72&Action=1&NewsId=70586&newscategory=31>

National protest against censorship

<http://malta.indymedia.org/node/8752>

'Obscene' story editor to face charges

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100108/local/obscene-story-editor-to-face-charges>