



# SIMON ON MONDAY

# Organised crime

The assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia has dominated both local and international news. Despite the fact that Malta has had a number of car bombs attacks, this is the first car bomb of this type in our island's history.

In none of the previous attacks was a car thrown a good number of metres away. It has been reported that her car ended up 70 metres away from the spot of the explosion. Never before has semtex (which is a very sophisticated type of explosive and very difficult to detect) been used in Malta. This type of explosion clearly shows that whoever planted this bomb left nothing to chance. The only other similar attack that comes to my mind was the one against judge Giovanni Falcone. His car was blown up by the Mafia, in Sicily, in 1992.

This assassination comes at a moment when international news is dominated by cases of international corruption. There was the news that HSBC is being investigated for possible recycling of illegal money for South Africa. Dubai's name was also mentioned as playing a central role in this illicit business. By this I am not implying that there is a link between this story and Daphne's assassination. But it cannot be denied that one of these countries was part of her investigative journalism and could explain in part international interest in this case.

Many read this assassination as an attack against free speech in Malta. While one cannot deny this basic and an important fact, there is more to this tragedy than an attack on free speech.

This assassination does not appear to be the result of some form of local vendetta because someone was offended by her *contra personam* or vitriolic writings. However, it is up to the investigators to establish whether locals are involved or not. But it cannot be denied that there is a touch of international criminality behind this murder, which here I shall be loosely referring to as Mafia, even if, some Italian newspapers have not excluded that this is a proper Mafia execution. This makes what is happening in Malta even more serious.

This murder confirms that our island has started to be ruled by an oligarchy that now has the power to decide who wins or loses an election. Like any oligarchy, power rests in the hands of the few, who normally are also extremely rich. They have an interest to safeguard the well-being of the citizen but, in return, expect to be above the law. To achieve this, they use their own men to infiltrate certain institutions. In a democracy where oligarchies take over institutions, the required balance ceases to exist and the country

will be in extreme danger.

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat has shown genuine concern for this situation. As PM of a sovereign state, he needs to guarantee that our country remains sovereign. If the Mafia starts dictating law in Malta, Malta risks becoming a springboard for the introduction of organized crime into Europe. Like a virus, the mafia can start infecting the whole of Europe from Malta.

Normally, mafia controls are linked to regions and regional governments. With this murder, we are witnessing a new development. The mafia is attempting to control a sovereign state. Regional governments made it difficult for Mafia to infiltrate Europe. By setting up roots in Malta, the mafia can start infiltrating European institutions that were set up specifically to stop oligarchies from taking full control and power.

This is why I am insisting that the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia is not only an attack on freedom of expression and this is why this very serious crime has caught the attention of the international press. No other car bomb in Malta, and we have had many, had such a devastating effect. Daphne could have been assassinated for what she has written or for what she was about to write. The foreign newspapers made an emphasis on her investigations about the Panama papers and this would imply a foreign interest in her assassination. Her son Matthew specifically stated that Henley and Partners tried to silence his mother but through legal means.

But Caruana Galizia could have also been assassinated in what may be described as a strategy of terror. Through her assassination, international crime could be sending a clear message to the Maltese. The mafia is making it public that, in Malta, it wants to be left alone. The mafia is ready to support and guarantee to the Maltese nation a good economic standard of living but in return, journalists, the police and others should not begin to ask questions.

However, I am not sure that it was a wise decision for the Prime Minister to ask for the help of FBI. Such a choice is going to create more controversy. One particular foreign news agency that reported Daphne's assassination, is accusing America of colluding with international crime in what is now being called a Gladio B operation. Daphne Caruana Galizia touched on these points

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both leaders of the main political parties.

Why am I stating this? The modality of this murder, which appears to be of mafia matrix still does not explain what is happening in Malta. There is one word in Italian to describe the local situation. Malta is becoming a state of “collusi”. The literal translation of the word “collusi” into English is colluded but the best way to describe it is that our state is now in cahoots with organised crime.

In this context, the interpretation given that this murder was a message to the entire Maltese nation to remain silent is correct. In Italy, this is called *Omerta'*. The Italian word *Omerta'* is normally translated into English as conspiracy of silence. This assassination is a message to us Maltese, to become “omertosi”. This word is today part of the mafia semantic diction. With this murder, the Maltese nation is being told to close both eyes to stories of corruption. In return, the mafia guarantees Malta its economic progress. The mafia today has a yearly turnover of billions. But if we are going to start questioning its operation or should government start having second thoughts, one would meet the same fate as Daphne Caruana Galizia or else our economic surplus cannot continue to be guaranteed.

I am sure that there are individuals in Malta who know who the killers are. What is at stake here is not just the police force saving face by solving this heinous assassination. The future of the Maltese Republic is in question. Should the police fail to solve this case, it would be sending a clear message to the world that the island is fast sliding into an oligarchy. Oligarchs are taking over and they know that they can rest in power as long as the people are divided. As Ganesh Sitaraman, the author of the book *The Crisis of the Middle-Class Constitution* has recently argued, in this type of scenario, the occasional protest is useless and will not instil any fear among those in charge.

But the message that is being sent to the outside world is extremely worrying: it is one that here, there is a corrupt government, inept civil institutions and an ineffective opposition. This would truly mean that Malta is the 4th most polluted state in the EU. This is why this assassination has taken the world media by storm. Despite a good budget, Malta is possibly becoming a failed State.

in her articles.

It is a murder that took place after the capture of the biggest drug haul in Maltese history. But it is a murder that must have been studied for months if not years. It is a murder that occurred at a moment when she decided to start questioning