

## **To Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament**

We are Maltese, or Malta-based, writers, authors, artists, academics, researchers and activists who - alongside the population at large - have been witnessing with horror, day after day, the planned destruction of Gaza and your, at best, timid reactions in the face of this man-made catastrophe. To our shame we have left it late to collectively speak out. May this letter make good for that failing on our part.

Reports indicate that at the very least 54,000 people have died, of whom 70% are women and children. Entire families have been buried under the rubble. 180 journalists and 120 academics have perished. However, "*have died*" is the wrong expression. This is not a natural disaster. Each and every one of these Palestinians was killed, many of whom as a result of a relentless bombing campaign targeting densely populated zones which have now been transformed into dust. 224 aid workers have been murdered while fulfilling their duty to save lives in the direst of circumstances.

Statistics don't lie, but they do not tell the whole truth either. Death after violent death, every horrifying atrocity, each and every one of them was carried out with impunity by a state you rushed to embrace and which you have publicly endorsed diplomatically and symbolically on multiple occasions while maintaining an eerie silence when its representatives' genocidal language - '*human animals*', '*Amalek*', '*there are no innocent civilians in Gaza*' - and grinding war machine got into gear.

With every lost opportunity to speak out, you have chosen to look away from the devastating effect of each sniper's bullet, each missile blasting a playground to bits, or a hospital, an ambulance, a crowd of desperate people seeking food and refuge.

This is genocide, planned and implemented. Sitting cynically on the fence is abhorrent at the best of times, let alone now. Hedging geopolitical bets is not an option. In the face of mass violations of human rights and human suffering on this horrific scale, to be silent when one has a platform to speak from - as you certainly do - is to be complicit. Those in leadership roles, especially those whose eyes are firmly set on being on the right side of history and who talk on behalf of all Europeans - as you regularly claim to do - are obliged to take up the clearest and fiercest of fights against those committing ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Dr Metsola, you have failed utterly at this critical moment to speak out for what is right as a man-made catastrophe unfolded in our neighbourhood, enabled by European policies and European weapons. The mind boggles as to how you are able to carry on with your breezy business as usual, photographers and camerapeople in tow.

When Hamas launched its despicable attack on 7th October you were quick to condemn it and stand in solidarity with Israel. That was the right thing to do. You stood solemnly outside the European Parliament and stated that it was not the time for whataboutism. Dr Metsola, what about Israel's genocidal actions? Why no official gathering in the Simon Veil Agora for the many thousands of innocents dead at the hands of Israel? Why the double standards?

Why the cowardice?

When it comes to journalists, the hypocrisy is glaring. You rightly demand justice for Daphne Caruana Galizia - naming and shaming those who were found to be politically responsible for the climate that led to her murder - but you had nothing to say about the targeted assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh and the hundreds more journalists shot, maimed and blown up by Israel over the past 20 months. Was your "*too many journalists have died*" when pressed by a journalist really all you could muster?

As Maltese citizens and residents we are ashamed of you. Cowardly, calculating politicians are not what this troubled world needs. Having a Maltese person in a top European role – however symbolic that role may be - would be commendable and an honour to our nation if it wasn't for the fact that we are shocked by your silences, your choice of words and your double standards. We demand a moral backbone from our politicians: to speak out clearly in the face of an announced ethnic cleansing operation.

Not long ago you proudly stood for election on a rule of law ticket, an uncompromising voice against domestic corruption. You made a splash refusing to shake hands with the then Prime Minister, a strong gesture. But that gesture now appears so hollow in light of the resounding silence of your timid reaction, as Israel, month after month, upped its ante against a civilian population. Proving that you can be bold when you wish to be, within days you took a sustained, prominent stand against the Russian invasion of Ukraine on which you have continued to speak out, uncompromisingly, on every occasion afforded to you. Yet you have chosen to remain almost entirely silent as Israel pounded a people under occupation: a furtive reply to a journalist here, a brief stock statement there about 'the two-state solution', all in the most muted of tones.

You recently stated, "*I am extremely aware of the responsibility I have as President of the European Parliament*". We are afraid to say that no, you do not represent us. We expect far better from our leaders. Through these double standards you have played a role in undermining Europe's own moral standing in the world. You have undermined any claim to the universal values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, accountability and justice we cherish. You have played your symbolic part in undermining international law as a consequence of your selective outrage and staged moral indignation on the altar of what is politically expedient to your career. The moment demands acknowledging the moral failure of too many institutions in the face of the greatest man-made human catastrophe of our times unfolding on our Mediterranean border.

Allow us to list just a small selection of those experts, organisations and institutions who have written in no uncertain terms, based on years of expertise and research, what you have chosen to ignore or worse still, failed to acknowledge and act upon. The evidence for genocide is endless. William Schabas, author of "*Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes*" defined what is happening in Gaza as genocide. John Quigley, author of "*The Genocide Convention: An International Law Analysis*" acknowledged in no uncertain terms that this amounts to genocide. Dirk Moses, author of "*The Problems of Genocide*" is in no doubt that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to genocide. In 2024, five months into Israel's military operation, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, had already warned about all of this, in detail, in her report entitled "*Anatomy of a Genocide*".

Both Amnesty International's 297-page and Human Rights Watch's 179-page reports clearly document, page after harrowing page, the crimes committed in Gaza, concluding that extermination and genocide are being perpetrated. A former Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, and Major General and former Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon confirm that war crimes and ethnic cleansing are being carried out.

Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich have openly called for the annihilation of all Gazans. Where, then, is your clear condemnation of these genocidal statements? The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Words, more than ever, matter, and matter greatly.

But to this day you have merely deemed Israel's reaction to be 'disproportionate'. Whenever you are prompted by a journalist – as you were in Copenhagen the other day - you still talk about '*the humanitarian situation in Gaza*' as if this were a natural disaster, the result of a flood or earthquake. At most, in your world, '*innocent people are killed*'. By whom? For what purpose? In breach of which rules of international criminal law? You never tell us, Dr Metsola. Even if this was a normal crime scene, your choice of words would be utterly inadequate. The fact that this is anything but normal, makes your reticence to speak clearly deeply worrying.

Your brief whistlestop visit to Gaza, organised and choreographed by the IDF and which you appear to flag as proof that you have done something, does not even begin to scratch the surface of what your actions – and words - should have been throughout the past 20 months of programmed, relentless human suffering on a scale we have rarely witnessed in our lifetime.

Power and position demanded better of you. In this key moment, you continue to fail the hundreds of thousands of citizens across Europe who want their representatives to stand up for what is morally right. Tragically, this total abandonment of our core principles and values is not just a failure borne of cynical political convenience but a catastrophe for the European Union's standing in the world.

Signed

1. Alex Vella Gera, Author, [REDACTED]
2. Karl Schembri, Author and aid worker, [REDACTED]
3. Immanuel Mifsud, Author and professor, [REDACTED]
4. Kurt Borg, Author and lecturer, [REDACTED]
5. Clare Azzopardi, Author, [REDACTED]
6. Albert Gatt, Academic, Professor at University of Utrecht and Malta, [REDACTED]
7. Miriam Calleja Shaw, Poet, [REDACTED]
8. Klara Vassallo, Poet, [REDACTED]
9. Joe Pace, Author, [REDACTED]
10. Maria Frendo, Academic and musician, [REDACTED]
11. Justine Somerville, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
12. Yosanne Vella, Professor, [REDACTED]
13. Simone Galea, Professor and author, [REDACTED]
14. Reuben John Grima, Professor, [REDACTED]
15. John P Portelli, Author and Professor Emeritus University of Toronto, [REDACTED]
16. James Debono, Journalist, [REDACTED]
17. Matthew Vella, Journalist, [REDACTED]
18. Jurgen Balzan, Journalist, [REDACTED]
19. Mario Vella, Musician, [REDACTED]
20. Glen Calleja, Author and publisher, [REDACTED]
21. Lydia Zammit, Independent lecturer, [REDACTED]
22. Marco Galea, Professor, [REDACTED]
23. Ralph Cassar, Senior Lecturer MCAST, [REDACTED]
24. Jacqueline Rotin, Lecturer and activist, [REDACTED]
25. Joseph Gravina, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
26. Adrian Stivala, Former senior lecturer University of Malta, [REDACTED]
27. Aleks Farrugia, kittieb, [REDACTED]
28. Karm Serracino, Academic, [REDACTED]
29. Jean-Paul De Lucca, Professor, [REDACTED]

30. Daniela DeBono, Professor, [REDACTED]
31. David E Zammit, Professor, [REDACTED]
32. Ibtisam Sadegh, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
33. Jean Paul Borg, Translator, [REDACTED]
34. John Aquilina, Author, [REDACTED]
35. Josephine Ann Cutajar, Professor, [REDACTED]
36. Louise Chircop, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
37. Romeo Roxman Gatt, Artist, [REDACTED]
38. Liam Agius, Author, [REDACTED]
39. Keith Borg, Author, [REDACTED]
40. Priscilla Cassar, Activist, [REDACTED]
41. Robert Louis Fenech, Journalist and activist, [REDACTED]
42. Maurice Said, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
43. Mohamed Ali Aguerbi, Activist, [REDACTED]
44. Marta Vella, Artist, [REDACTED]
45. Michael Grech, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
46. David Agius Muscat, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
47. Keith (Kit) Azzopardi, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
48. Yana Mintoff, Activist, [REDACTED]
49. Leanne Ellul, Author and lecturer, [REDACTED]
50. Stefano Gualeni, Author and academic, [REDACTED]
51. Gilbert Gravino, Medical doctor and researcher, [REDACTED]
52. Liza Caruana-Finkel, Researcher and activist, [REDACTED]
53. Kenneth Scicluna, Filmmaker and lecturer, [REDACTED]
54. Alex Caruana, Activist, [REDACTED]
55. Anna Zammit, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
56. Raymond Michael Fabri, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
57. Noel Agius, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
58. John Paul Cauchi, Academic and activist, [REDACTED]
59. Angela Deguara, Academic and activist, [REDACTED]
60. Mary Grace Vella, Academic and activist, [REDACTED]
61. Vincent Caruana, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
62. Claudia Gauci, Author, [REDACTED]
63. David Aloisio, Author and academic, [REDACTED]
64. Rachelle Deguara, Artist, [REDACTED]
65. Therese Camilleri, Academic, [REDACTED]
66. Robert Attard, Artist and activist, [REDACTED]
67. Lara Calleja, Author, [REDACTED]
68. Nina Musumeci, Artist and activist, [REDACTED]
69. Antoine Cassar, Author, [REDACTED]
70. Raylene Abdilla, Lecturer and researcher, [REDACTED]
71. Lorraine Vella, Author and editor, [REDACTED]
72. Joe Gatt, Author and editor, [REDACTED]
73. Omar N'Shea, Author and lecturer, [REDACTED]
74. Davinia Hamilton, Author, [REDACTED]
75. Noah Fabri, Musician and author, [REDACTED]
76. Warren Bartolo, Author, [REDACTED]
77. James John Bugeja, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
78. Daniel Vella, Academic and author, [REDACTED]
79. Gabriel Zammit, Curator and writer, [REDACTED]
80. Francesca Zammit, Artist and activist, [REDACTED]
81. Alexander Vella Gregory, Composer and lecturer, [REDACTED]
82. Stephanie Sant, Artist, [REDACTED]
83. Gilbert Calleja, Academic, [REDACTED]
84. Arnold Cassola, Professor and politician, [REDACTED]

85. Claire Azzopardi Lane, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
86. Sammy Meilaq, Former trade unionist, [REDACTED]
87. Wayne Flask, Activist, [REDACTED]
88. Adrian Grima, Author, [REDACTED]
89. Chris Gruppetta, Publisher, [REDACTED]
90. Belle de Jong, Journalist, [REDACTED]
91. Walid Nabhan, Author, [REDACTED]
92. Julia Alegre Mouslim, Marie Curie Scholar, [REDACTED]
93. Maria Borg Vella, Educator, [REDACTED]
94. Raphael Borg, Educator, [REDACTED]
95. Marvic Camilleri, Activist and artist, [REDACTED]
96. Angele Galea, Political artist, [REDACTED]
97. Luke J. Buhagiar, Academic, [REDACTED]
98. Marija Vella, Activist, [REDACTED]
99. Sammy Vella, Activist, [REDACTED]
100. Maria Sammut, Architect, gardener, assistant social work facilitator, [REDACTED]
101. Matthew Agius, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
102. Abigail Muscat, Scientist, [REDACTED]
103. Samuel Muscat, Scientist, [REDACTED]
104. Fabio Spiteri, Ultra athlete, [REDACTED]
105. Stephen Cachia, Author, [REDACTED]
106. Michelle Attard Tonna, Lecturer, [REDACTED]
107. Carlos Zarb, Activist, [REDACTED]
108. Eman Farrugia, Student activist, [REDACTED]
109. Charles Flores, Author and journalist, [REDACTED]
110. Alec Farrugia Cachia, Activist, [REDACTED]
111. Antonio Dato, Former dockyard worker, [REDACTED]
112. François Zammit, Doctoral researcher, [REDACTED]
113. Irene Mangion, Translator, [REDACTED]
114. Nil Ramos, Translator, [REDACTED]
115. Cynthia Amato, Project leader, [REDACTED]
116. Caroline Morales, Activist, [REDACTED]
117. Mary Sammut, Manager, [REDACTED]
118. Marthese Formosa, Activist, [REDACTED]
119. William Grech, Activist, [REDACTED]
120. Liża Mallia, [REDACTED]
121. Anna Calleja, Artist, [REDACTED]
122. Andreas Borg, Student, [REDACTED]
123. Matthew Borg, Activist, [REDACTED]
124. James Sater, Professor, [REDACTED]
125. Anna Khakee, Professor, [REDACTED]
126. Ryan Falzon, Artist and author, [REDACTED]
127. Riccardo Alessio Oliva, [REDACTED]
128. Andre Callus, Activist, [REDACTED]
129. Christine Cassar, Activist, [REDACTED]
130. Ruth Chircop, Activist, [REDACTED]
131. Rossann Delia, Activist, [REDACTED]
132. Martina Camilleri, Activist, [REDACTED]
133. Miguel Azzopardi, Researcher and activist, [REDACTED]
134. Rafel Grima, Activist, [REDACTED]
135. Ruth Mercieca, Activist, [REDACTED]
136. Karen Tanti, Activist, [REDACTED]
137. Gabriel Apap, Trade Unionist, [REDACTED]
138. Sarah Schembri, Researcher and activist, [REDACTED]
139. Amy Theuma, Artist & activist, [REDACTED]

140. Claria Cutajar, Activist, [REDACTED]
141. Samuel Zammit, Activist, [REDACTED]
142. Amy Marie Abela, Activist, [REDACTED]
143. Tokyo Attard, Activist, [REDACTED]
144. Terence Muscat, Activist and engineer, [REDACTED]
145. Jacob J. Micallef, Activist and teacher, [REDACTED]
146. Jana Farrugia, Activist, [REDACTED]
147. Giulia Bertone, Activist, [REDACTED]
148. Eric Castillo, Activist, [REDACTED]
149. Matthew Agius, Activist, [REDACTED]
150. Maya d'Ugo, Researcher, [REDACTED]
151. Josef Florian Micallef, Activist and lecturer, [REDACTED]
152. Justin Zarb, Data analyst, [REDACTED]
153. Sarah Mallia, Film producer, [REDACTED]
154. Debbie Caruana Dingli, Artist, [REDACTED]
155. Michaela Mallia, Architect, [REDACTED]
156. Colin Calleja, Professor and Dean of Faculty of Education, [REDACTED]
157. Kevin Saliba, Writer, [REDACTED]
158. Dominik Kalweit, Activist, [REDACTED]
159. Cedric Farrugia, Activist, [REDACTED]
160. Chief Nyamweya, Film producer, [REDACTED]