

The NATIONAL INTEREST FOUNDATION

[Maltese Prime Minister Announces His Plan to Resign](#)

The Prime Minister of Malta, Joseph Muscat, has pledged to step down in January amid civil unrest over the unresolved murder of a journalist in 2017. Daphne Caruana Galizia was an investigative journalist and anti-corruption activist who was killed by a car bomb. Three people were arrested in the immediate aftermath of the bombing, but new information has surfaced that links real estate tycoon Yorgen Fenech as the principle architect behind it. Almost three years on from the murder, the government's lack of urgency on finding the perpetrators has frustrated Maltese citizens who have organized demonstrations to demand accountability.

Daphne Galizia exposed corruption at the highest levels of Malta's government, and Muscat's former chief of staff, Keith Schembri, has been implicated in her murder. Schembri was the subject of some of Galizia's investigative journalism, and he was arrested during the investigation before being released. Both Mr. Schembri and Tourism Minister Konrad Mizzi have resigned over the course of the investigation. Ms. Galizia's research angered many people, particularly when her research was used alongside the Panama Papers to prove high levels of corruption in Malta. Galizia's family believes the government, including Prime Minister Muscat, conspired to silence her, and they have called for his immediate removal from office. They have also threatened legal action to prevent government intervention in the police forces investigating her murder, as there are suspicions that the prime minister has covered up evidence linking the murder to members of his inner circle. Additionally, Yorgen Fenech has close links to elites in Maltese society, including members of the Muscat Administration such as Schembri and Mizzi. Maltese citizens have staged protests over the government's handling of the case, and Muscat's resignation announcement came in the aftermath of a large-scale demonstration in the capital city of Valletta.

Muscat's departure from office will give Malta's ruling Labor Party an opportunity to replace him, and their strong parliamentary majority means it is unlikely that a general election will be called. As recently as this summer, Labor MPs in Malta unanimously backed Muscat as the party's leader and expressed their support for his continued leadership of the country. Muscat is hoping that his resignation will appease protestors who continue to call for justice for Ms. Galizia, but whether or not that will be the case remains unclear. In addition to finding a new Prime Minister, Malta's leaders must meet a delegation from the European Union which is scheduled to travel to the country in the coming days to evaluate the legitimacy of the rule of law.