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2



PRESS RELEASE BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

Speaker of the House of Representatives addresses the session on Violence Against Politicians at the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament being held in Strasbourg

Speaker of the House of Representatives Anġlu Farrugia delivered a speech at the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament. during the session focusing on Violence Against Politicians. The conference held in Strasbourg brought together Speakers and presidents of parliament from the 46 member states of the Council of Europe.

In his speech, the Speaker underscored the importance of debate in democracy, noting that it is increasingly challenged by intimidation, violence, and threats. He expanded on the notion that violence extends beyond physical attacks to encompass online hatred, misinformation, character assassination, and the deliberate perversion of truth. He highlighted that women politicians are particularly vulnerable, facing psychological abuse, death threats, and intimidation.

The Speaker stressed that combating violence against politicians and citizens is a top priority for Malta's upcoming Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. He called for stronger protections against violence and discrimination, emphasising the need for a political landscape where every voice, especially those of women and marginalised groups, can be expressed without fear.

“If violence is permitted to pervade politics, it is not solely those in office who suffer—it is every individual who dares to engage in democracy,” cautioned Speaker Anġlu Farrugia. He advocated for robust legislation to protect against incitement to violence, both online and offline, while holding accountable those who spread hate speech. In addition, Speaker Farrugia urged for enhanced psychological and trauma support for victims of political violence and emphasised the necessity for swift justice in response to threats and attacks. He called for special attention for women and minority politicians through stronger legal safeguards and mentorship programs to support underrepresented voices in politics.

Referring to the Sette Giugno, the Speaker highlighted its significance as a symbol of the citizen's struggle for self-determination and democratic rights. It serves as a reminder that democracy must be anchored in accountability, truth, and responsible debate. Thus, it is significant to uphold citizens' fundamental right to reply within Parliament—allowing individuals to defend themselves against defamation.

In his concluding remarks, Speaker Anġlu Farrugia asserted the need to restore trust in politicians and institutions. He encouraged the reinforcement of ethical codes, prohibition of inflammatory rhetoric, and enhanced



PRESS RELEASE

transparency and ethical governance. He acknowledged that political violence transcends national borders, describing it as a global affliction that requires collective action.

Speaker Farrugia emphasised that politicians must lead by example by denouncing violence, misinformation, and hate speech in all its manifestations. We must fortify democracy by protecting all those who engage with it—politicians, journalists, activists, and citizens alike.