

05

Nov
2018
▲ Lvl. 2

State replied

Cyprus

n° 7/2018

Alert created on: 25 Jan 2018

Russian Whistleblower, Daphne Caruana Galizia's Source, Faces Arrest Warrant in Cyprus after Complaint from Former Employer

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

PARTNER: Index, EFJ/IFJ

On 16 January 2018, Cyprus issued a European arrest warrant against Maria Efimova, a Russian whistleblower, following a complaint filed by the Russian-owned Cypriot company IFD Fragrance Distribution against Efimova, who is accused of stealing from the company.

Maria Efimova, former Pilatus Bank employee, had tipped off Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia that the wife of the Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, Michelle Muscat, was allegedly the owner of Egrant Inc., a Panamanian offshore company.

Efimova, who lived in Cyprus four years ago before moving to Malta, says these new charges are part of a plot to discredit her and to extradite her to Malta, where she was placed on the wanted list, after failing to turn up for court sittings. Efimova left Malta in August 2017, fearing for her life and that of her family, after having given evidence to the prosecution on the allegations regarding the PM's wife ownership of the Panama offshore company. The Prime Minister and his wife denied the allegations and called for a judicial inquiry.

Efimova has now applied for political asylum in an unspecified European Union country and asked from the European Parliament's Committee of Inquiry into money laundering, tax avoidance and tax evasion to recognise her as a whistleblower.

The European Parliament, asked EU member states, including Malta, to protect Efimova and grant her asylum, after a delegation led by the Portuguese MEP, Ana Gomes visited Malta in late November 2017.

UPDATES

14 Jun 2018: On 14 June, the Greek Court of Appeal denied the request for extradition of Maria Efimova.

➔ **Article published by The Shift: "Maria Efimova wins case, no extradition to Malta"**

12 Apr 2018: On 12 April 2018, an Athens Court ruled that Maria Efimova will not be extradited to Malta, because there were no guarantees that "she would be granted a fair trial". An appeal was filed by the Greek prosecutor's office.

➔ **Article published by The Shift: "Maria Efimova will not be extradited to Malta"**

20 Mar 2018: On 19 March, Maria Efimova voluntarily turned herself in to the Greek police in Athens, fearing for her life. She was transferred to court custody on 20 March.

➔ **Article published by The Guardian: "Malta corruption whistleblower hands herself in to police"**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

➔ **Report published by the OCCRP: "Cyprus Issues Arrest Warrant Against Whistleblower"**

➔ **Report published on Mapping Media Freedom: "Cyprus: Government issues arrest warrant for murdered Maltese journalist's source"**

STATE REPLIES



05 Nov 2018 | Official reply of the Cyprus Authorities

➔ **Letter addressed to the Council of Europe**