

Lassana's death: A call to action

JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

We are shocked and saddened beyond words by the confirmation that the drive-by shooting on April 6th which left Lassana Cisse dead and two other men seriously injured was an act of racial hatred.

That the two men suspected of committing this heinous crime are members of the Armed Forces of Malta – a state institution that is there to protect us – makes it even more reprehensible.

It would be tempting to disassociate ourselves from this crime, to dismiss it as a random act, perpetrated by one or two deranged individuals. But we know that it is not, because we daily come in contact with people who are treated as less than human, by individuals and institutions, because of their religion or the colour of their skin.

For too long we have ignored the daily experiences of the migrants in our midst and clung to the myth that racist incidents are isolated, and rare, occurrences in Malta. For too long we have accepted without comment, much less condemnation, intolerant views, derogatory comments and inflammatory speeches.

This act, which has exposed the ugly reality of racism in our midst, should serve as a wake-up call, a stark reminder of just how destructive racism can be if it is left to fester, unacknowledged and unaddressed.

While the work of the police to bring the perpetrators to justice is commendable, we need to do far more if we want to overcome racism and intolerance and promote an inclusive society where all are perceived as truly equal, and where all are respected and protected.

In the wake of yesterday's announcement, we call upon the government and all politicians to go beyond one-time condemnation of this act of violence, and to commit to taking concrete action against all forms of racism and intolerance. Although changes in people's minds and hearts cannot be achieved only by changing the law or by political statements, we have seen that clear, strong and consistent political leadership can make a real difference in the way minorities in our midst are treated.

In the wake of this horrific crime we urge the authorities to show the determination required to fight racism and discrimination and to promote the dignity of all, regardless of real or perceived differences. Because until racism is addressed with the seriousness it deserves, and every single case is duly reported and investigated, Malta will never be a safe country for all.

We also call on each and every individual to stand against racism and to work for a society which is truly inclusive and just. Our action, and our inaction, make a difference. This is not about others, it is about us – about the kind of country we want to live in. We owe it to Lassana and others who have been and continue to be victims of racist crimes, to ourselves and to our children, to take racism seriously. Let us not be remembered for our inability to learn from the lessons of history, for our silence in the face of hatred and intolerance, for our unwillingness to take a stand in favour of human dignity.

This statement is endorsed by:

1. aditus foundation
2. African Media Association
3. Agara Foundation
4. Allied Rainbow Communities
5. Blue Door English
6. Caritas Malta
7. Catholic Voices
8. Christian Life Communities (CLC) Malta
9. Church Homes for the Elderly
10. Creative Arts Therapies Society (CATS) Malta
11. Cross Culture International Foundation
12. Dar Hosea
13. Dar tal-Providenza
14. Department for Gender Studies (University of Malta)
15. Department for Inclusion and Access to Learning (University of Malta)
16. Department of Family Studies (University of Malta)
17. Department of Social Policy and Social Work (University of Malta)
18. Drachma LGBTI
19. Drachma Parents Group
20. Fondazzjoni Sebh
21. Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants
22. Hal Far Outreach
23. Integra Foundation
24. International Association for Refugees
25. Isles of the Left
26. Jesuit Refugee Service Malta
27. Kopin
28. Kummissjoni Gustizzja u Paci tal-Arcidjocesi ta' Malta
29. Life Network Foundation
30. Malta Chamber of Psychologists
31. Malta Emigrants Commission
32. Maltese Association of Social Workers (MASW)
33. Men Against Violence
34. Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS)
35. Migrant Women's Association Malta
36. Millenium Chapel
37. Moviment Graffiti
38. Office of the Dean, Faculty for Social Wellbeing (University of Malta)
39. Office of the Dean, Faculty of Education (University of Malta)
40. Paolo Freire Institute
41. Peace and Good Foundation
42. People for Change Foundation
43. Richmond Foundation
44. Salesians of Don Bosco

45. Segretarjat Assistenza Soċjali tal-Azzjoni Kattolika Maltija
46. Segretarjat Djakonija tal-Arcidjoċesi ta' Malta
47. Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in Malta
48. Society of St Vincent de Paule Malta (SSVP)
49. Solidarity with Migrants Group
50. SOS Malta
51. Spark 15
52. Studenti Harsien Soċjali (SHS)
53. Sudanese Migrants Association
54. The Critical Institute
55. University of Malta Chaplaincy
56. Women's Rights Foundation
57. YMCA
58. Youth Alive Foundation
59. John Berry, Faculty of Theology (University of Malta)
60. Sr Rita Mangion