

**SPEECH BY H.E. MARIE LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA, PRESIDENT OF MALTA AT THE  
OPENING OF A LECTURE BY PROFS SUSAN HIRSCH "NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE:  
CAN PROTEST SAVE US IN THESE TIMES?"**

**10 MARCH 2017**

**Dear Professor Hirsch**

**Dear guests**

**Dear friends**

**I am truly honoured to welcome once again, Professor Susan Hirsch, lecturer and researcher, from the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, of the George Mason University, and a Fulbright scholar at the Faculty of Laws of the University of Malta.**

**It is truly my pleasure to open today's public lecture.**

**Over the past years, Susan's lectures have become a much-anticipated feature in the calendar of events, organised by the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.**

**This evening's talk by Professor Hirsch will focus on the power of protest, with the aim to encourage effective peaceful and sustainable change within society.**

**As the world faces unprecedented social and political changes, it has never been more essential to encourage and mobilise active citizenship.**

**My experience with young people, has made me much more aware of the need they feel, to have safe opportunities and spaces, to discuss pressing issues that are relevant to their lives.**

**The creation of safe spaces for children and young people has been central to the ethos of my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, and the *raison d'être* of my Presidency.**

**I believe that a nation is stronger when it encourages its young people to become activists, to enhance its democratic participation.**

**Such provision of safe spaces for young people, should be an ongoing structured process in a democratic society.**

**I believe that a nation's resilience is created and developed by living up to the aspirations of its young people.**

**When a nation is not listening to its young people and its citizens, due to the lack of structured processes of democratic participation, then protests occur.**

**We have seen such examples of protests in our own country, where civil society took the lead over issues such as the environment, migration, national heritage and precarity.**

**Thanks to these peaceful protests, and the leadership shown by civil society, many a time, our authorities had to change tack and policy.**

**This is certainly proof that active citizenship due to democratic participation, of one sort or another, is definitely effective.**

**On the other hand, when such protests and civil society are ignored, this attitude creates social tensions and can result in conflict.**

**Definitely, structured democratic participation is the antidote of tensions and conflicts.**

**I am informed that this evening's lecture will provide us with the insightful analysis about protest marches, by Profs Hirsch. Undoubtedly, Susan's experience in the fields of conflict studies and anthropology, will allow her to bring a unique perspective on the subject.**

**I am sure that, thanks to the lecture by Professor Hirsch this evening, we shall be in a better position to make good use of the protest as a strategy for peaceful change; as a means for bringing people together; and as a celebration of the ideals of justice and equity, which are only found within a living democracy.**

**Thank you.**