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TITLE: The Magnitsky Human Rights Awards 2019 – Ana Gomes

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SPEAKER

KYLE PARKER - K

ANA GOMES: A

K: Our award tonight for outstanding campaigning politician goes to a woman who is at once a lawyer, a legislator, a diplomat and an activist. As we were entering the final stages of our legislative battle in the US Congress in the fall of 2012 to pass The Magnitsky Act work had already begun by Ana Gomes and her colleagues, some of whom are in this room tonight to begin work concurrently on an EU Magnitsky Act and if you know even a little bit about the financial exposure and the love of travel that some of the world's worst kleptocrat's and human rights abusers you know that a European Magnitsky Act is a fearsome prospect for them. So Ana had been doing this and we are now at the dawn of a new European commission and so I hope we will see a new EU Magnitsky Act and that it will be implemented, but as important as it is to pass a law the work is at best only half done. I would say you then need to implement a law, even a good law can be ignored and can be forward.

You also need to track down in the particular case of sanctions laws acts of sanctions evasion and we have seen a lot of that particularly in the case of the targets that have been targeted under The Magnitsky Act, but in many other cases and you need someone who really can watch these details and exercise that oversight. And that's exactly what our awardee, Ana Gomes, has done in pushing for EU implementation, pushing for the commission to act on the repeated urgings in legislation of the European Parliament in tracking down individuals who have been evading sanctions and also and perhaps most importantly in closing loopholes like the so called golden visas and golden passports. You can't sanction people if they are your own nationals and so if you are able to purchase EU residence for citizenship without due diligence then you have effectively defanged some of the greatest tools we have for imposing even a small measure of justice, but not on Ana's watch and as we have seen recently in the case of Cypress and other countries that have begun to close this loophole.

So Ana is looking ahead to a time where we do have that EU Magnitsky Act and some of the challenges that will be faced in terms of implementing it and making sure that it is not evaded. In fact, I think, Ana, in your characteristic bluntness you have called this practice the 'prostitution of the Schengen system'. You know the case for human rights is generally easy to make and a very strong argument, but only if it's done publicly with clarity and honesty and Ana possesses these qualities in abundance and has used her decades of distinguished public service to make an effective case for justice, for human rights accountability. Whether that is meant confronting the likes of Vladimir Putin in legislation over the false arrest, torture and murder of Sergei Magnitsky or confronting Joseph Muscat publicly to his face over the impunity that reigns in the brutal assassination of Malta's most famous investigative journalist, Daphne Caruana Galizia, two years October 16th or impressing EU countries like Cypress to close these dangerous loopholes, loopholes that make a mockery of human rights and accountability and also expose us to grave national security challenges selling citizenship to the highest bidder.

Ana has never hesitated to present inconvenient facts or to flinch under pressure from dictators or organised crime and she has also been consistent unlike some politicians in calling on her own government to practice these same principles and keep its obligations. For all these reasons, Ana, you are most worthy recipient of

this award and it's an honour to present it to you tonight and Ana as long as there are people like you and our other awardees tonight in this room the heroic legacies of individuals like Sergei Magnitsky, like Boris Nemtsov, like Daphne Caruana Galizia and like Jamal Kashoggi will never die. Thank you, Ana.

A: Well, it's really an honour and an incentive to keep fighting because we need to keep fighting and I thank The Magnitsky Award committee, Bill Browder, for this incentive. I think it was in 2014 that one day Bill showed up in my office at the European Parliament saying, "You guys in the EU need an EU Magnitsky Act." And I said, "You're preaching to the converted, I have put it in a report and that report has been adopted by the European Parliament with an overwhelming majority," but, of course, as Kyle just highlighted the big challenge was make it happen and let me say I'm really very, very pleased that today here I have Miguel Carapeto was my assistant to help me draft that report, I have my other assistants that work so hard and I have so many of colleagues from my MEP's, but as well current MEP's I am really thrilled because, of course, without their support we wouldn't have made it happen. And last year we had the EU Magnitsky Act passed and the big fight was actually to call it Magnitsky you know.

Bill knows we were fighting to have it, not just have the Act, but have it called Magnitsky as it should and I am really honoured because when I think one of the people who helped me contribute to the sensibility in the European Parliament towards the report was actually linking the fight against corruption with the fight for human rights and development. And one of the people who helped me who was one of the witnesses there was Rafael Marques, an Angolan journalist and campaigner who was being threatened, sued, at risk in his own country Angola at the hands of the kleptocracy. Only last week he was decorated by the president of Angola, the new president trying indeed to fight kleptocracy and it shows that indeed this fight is really necessary and it's not all bark although indeed as other speakers have said this is a crucial time where we need to keep up this fight. And now that when we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the death of Sergei Magnitsky I read today what I think his wife has said that a new Magnitsky Act is not just about Sergei, it's about others and we know that.

We know that in the EU, we know that in the global village we live in. So many examples, I am so thrilled to be here with Maria Ressa with whom I worked with 20 years ago in Jakarta and I am thrilled to be here with so distinguished fighters like Oleg Sentsov, Gulchehra Hoja, the fantastic lawyers, James and Rupert that were just honoured and, of course, all the other campaigners here. We know that we need to fight, we need to keep up the fight, but we need to be together and in this day when we heard that, nothing really new, but at least the evidence that the downing of the MH17 went all the way up to the Kremlin is one more reason why we need that as well to go all the way up and down to all those perpetrators of horrendous human rights violations for brave people like Sergei Magnitsky were doing their duty by exposing the corrupt and the criminals. It is even more important these days. I mean here we are in London, close to the office a prime minister that is sitting on a report to high the truth, to hide the truth about the Russian influence to indeed manipulate and get Brexit adopted in the referendum.

Here we are at the same time where there is an impeachment process going on in the US, the country we all looked at as a stalwart of freedom and democracy and yet we have a president under impeachment for high suspicion of counterpart. Kyle has mentioned the golden visas. Yes the golden visa system is a corrupt system that actually holds many people for counterpart in many countries in the EU and the name of that amazing lady, Daphne Caruana Galizia was echoed today many times. She and Jan Kulczyk in Slovakia are the evidence of these outstanding journalists that keep fighting the corrupt no matter what, no matter the risks they are facing and in this case of Daphne, it's not just her, it's her family still under tremendous duress, tremendous cases. One more reason why we need to indeed keep up the fight, the fight for truth, the fight for democracy, the fight for the rule of law, it's our common responsibility of all of us and these are outstanding examples from Sergei Magnitsky to Daphne Caruana Galizia are the reason why we will be strong and we will keep fighting. Thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT