

# Open Society Initiative for Europe

Protecting the Right to hold Governments to Account

## Caroline Hunt-Matthes

Independent Sexual Violence investigator,  
UN whistleblower,  
University professor and Global-Geneva collaborator

Barcelona, 14 November 2019

## RE Citizens Dialogue

Dear Ms Hunt-Matthes,

Whilst we are unfortunately unable to attend the Klausturgate Revisited event in Iceland, my team and I very much appreciate the work you and others are doing to cement citizens' dialogue as a tool to hold elected officials to account.

At the Open Society Initiative for Europe, part of Open Society Foundations, we believe that without meaningful involvement of citizens and a healthy civil society our societies can be considered neither open nor democratic. Individual initiative and activism have always been important in holding power to account, but social networks and the multiplication of media outlets have made the systemic effect potentially much bigger. Governments have realized this, and a backlash is underway: whether human rights activists monitoring border crossings, cyber-activists following government contracts, individuals speaking up and reporting wrongdoing at their workplace or citizens filming police abuse, citizens who hold governments to account are under pressure.

The specific case you will be discussing in Iceland is of particular importance. It highlights the intersectional nature of an individual who stood up for what they thought was the right thing to do in exposing abuse of power and gross ethical violations by elected officials, and the backlash against this individual based on their diverse identities. Such bullying and legal actions against the individual in question are unfortunately the most common response and practice of silencing whistleblowers across Europe.

I hope that by bringing together the issues of citizens holding power to account and the #metoo phenomena you can shed light not only on the wrongdoing committed but on the consequences faced by those brave individuals speaking up.

I wish you all the success for the forum.

Kind regards,



**Peter Matjašič**

Senior Program Officer