



Brute force blow by blow

ROSE Parnis, 44, and her 16-year-old son were last Wednesday manhandled and arrested by a posse of St Julian's police officers, in an incident caught on Parnis's shop's CCTV.

Seven police officers entered her ironmongery to arrest her for failing to appear for a court sitting. But Parnis and her lawyer William Cuschieri insist she has neither received a summons, nor has she ever signed one.

The incident caught on CCTV shows the excessive and disproportionate use of force by police officers. All eyes are on Superintendent Sharon Tanti who runs the St Julian's district, and who has come under criticism from the media for her mishandling of arrests and detention of individuals.

Parnis's ordeal started years ago when her Naxxar home was burnt by her estranger husband, who is under psychiatric obser-

vation at Mt Carmel Hospital, by court order.

Months ago, she lodged a report to the police claiming her husband was still threatening her despite a court order not to approach her. The Naxxar police refused to process the report and instead booked her for allegedly breaching public order and blasphemy.

Parnis claims to have never received the court summons on this incident. And while the police presented their note, it transpires the summons was delivered to a residence that does not match Parnis's ID card details. Magistrate Silvio Meli however ordered that the woman be brought to court, accompanied by the police.

Last Wednesday, Sgt Robert Said Mamo, PC Sarah Kathleen Zerafa and another constable arrived at Parnis's shop in San Gwann at 4pm. They were later

joined by inspectors Bernard Spiteri and Brian Mifsud, and constables Emmanuel Agius and Joseph Mifsud. Another police officer waited outside the establishment.

When faced with the police, who demanded Parnis come down to the police station, her daughter informed them that she had just undergone hospitalisation for a heart condition. In the meantime, lawyer Dr William Cuschieri also called Superintendent Sharon Tanti to assure her that no summons was ever received, but that Parnis would appear next day in court.

Tanti declined the offer, alleging that Parnis's younger son was insulting the police officers back at the shop.

At this point, Parnis moved to the back of the shop, where she was followed by the police. Her son Clive pleaded with them not to take his mother away.

This was when the police assaulted the boy, grabbed him in a headlock and dragged him away. Clive's injuries from the incident were certified by Dr Joseph Saliba from the Mosta clinic, who confirmed the bruises to his wrists, lower back and neck. This was also the result of being pushed down a flight of steps.

At the shop, Rose was surrounded and manhandled by police officers. She fainted, and her daughter called for an ambulance. After laying on the floor for some time, she regained her senses, and then she was promptly handcuffed and taken away.

The ambulance arrived at the Police HQ, but was turned away. Later, the ambulance came back to take Parnis to Mater Dei. There, six policemen were assigned to guard Parnis while she was in hospital. She was released on Friday.

After interrogation, Parnis was

yesterday arraigned in court with urgency – accused of attacking six police officers. Magistrate Silvio Meli granted Parnis bail upon the request of defence lawyers William Cuschieri and Joe Mifsud, on a personal guarantee of €3,000 and on condition that she does not commit another crime, regardless of the opposition of prosecuting officer Bernard Spiteri – the same inspector involved in the attack.

Contacted by MaltaToday, Justice and Home Affairs Minister Carm Mifsud Bonnici said superintendent Mario Spiteri, from the internal investigations unit, was looking into the case of alleged manhandling and family relatives had already been interrogated. "I am always concerned about such allegations... nobody is above the law. All allegations will be taken seriously," Mifsud Bonnici said.

See Saviour Balzan page 17 ▶