

Dok 2

OPINION&LETTERS



Freedom of expression: Seen in San Gwann, since removed.

Political parties now have a choice.



MANUEL DELIA

Civil society has been driven to protest by the killing of Daphne Caruana Galizia. We have taken to the streets at least monthly in the 27 months since that outrage on our democratic and constitutional rights.

The right to freedom of expression is not some privilege given to journalists. Within it is the right of every citizen to be informed. If citizens are not informed, their voting and democratic decisions are not informed. Democracy does not function without journalists working freely to uncover wrongdoing.

A shift in the pace of protest occurred since Yorgen Fenech was arrested. More people understood that Caruana Galizia was killed for seeking to inform them of corruption in Joseph Muscat's government. More civil society organisations, more people joined the protest.

Civil society does not merely aspire to make noise when things aren't quite what they should be. Civil society aspires for change. We seek to build a better country.

The killing of Caruana Galizia exposed the crisis of more than just the state of free speech in Malta. It has exposed the vulnerability of our institutional make-up. The office of our prime minister is all-powerful and if a crook becomes prime minister, the laws of the land do not function anymore.

Our economy has grown dependant on dirty money that flows through here from the left pockets of Mafiosi, tax dodgers and embezzlers and flows back into their right pockets all cleaned up.

Organised crime has infiltrated Malta and, in some respects, we have been colonised to serve the interests of faceless lords of smuggling, slavery and violence. What little countryside we have left has become the playing field of money laun-

derers. Unlike Pablo Escobar who buried his cash in plastic barrels in the fields around Medellin, our more sophisticated bandits turned the cash into concrete transforming our towns into cement pigeon lofts and spreading onto the countryside like a grey disease.

The phantom demand for property has inflated prices pushing home ownership out of the reach of more people and making tenancy unaffordable for some for whom an underground garage or even their car is now their home.

A huge chunk of the generation of electricity in Malta is now in private hands. Perhaps that would not be so bad if its owners had to submit to the pressures of the market. But the Electrogas deal was no liberal opening to market forces. It was a corrupt, corporatist arrangement that guarantees income to the cronies whatever their cost to produce.

A large portion of our national health service has been privatised with no significant investment in its improvement. Patients go to the same hospitals, expected to be grateful for a fresh lick of paint but getting a worse service as corners are cut to secure profits, except the official word for it is 'efficiency'.

The government tolerates no objection. Questions go unanswered and accountability is at an all-time low. Except in strictly controlled circumstances, ministers do not give the press any interviews. When they do get door stepped, they reply with disdain and mockery and leave out any hint of substance.

The parliamentary opposition, the press, civil society - all are contemptuously ignored. Sometimes it's worse than that. Consider how the weight of the State in the shape of the over-employed culture czar Jason Micallef came down on a singer who is due on stage at a protest in Valletta this afternoon.

Why her in particular? Because she appears regularly on a TV show on the national TV station. It's but another case of intimidation and the very real threat of retaliation for stepping out of the official line.

Protesting the assassination of Caruana Galizia, therefore, is protesting the assassi-

nation of our democratic life. It is about the threat to several freedoms, not just the right to speak and learn. It is about the threat to decent living: safe from the cross-fire of organised crime, with a safety net for the poorest, with excellent and free health service for everyone, with affordable housing for all, with a clean and sustained urban and rural environment for each one of us.

And it is also about protesting for an honest living for the country. A sustainable economy cleaned out of its current addictions, our desperate search for a fix of a quick, dirty buck.

It may come as a shock to the current political class that civil society wants to do more than honk on horns and wave flags. The Joseph Muscats, the Chris Farnes and the Robert Abelas of this world may be used to their audiences waving and honking happily until they're sent home to feed on what One TV dishes out for the night. We're a different crowd. Annoyingly, we're like Ollver. We'll come back for more.

It is clear to us all that Muscat's imminent resignation is a strategic retreat. His successors have spent the last weeks justifying the OCCRP 2019 Man of the Year for Corruption and his criminal government. Neither one of them even remotely touched the issues that brought about the

killing of Caruana Galizia. Neither one of them sought to explain and help the country come to terms with how badly things have gone these past six years. None of them even tried to make empty promises about reform.

Instead, their campaigns can be summed up in the words of one of them: "For as long as I live the PN will never be in government". I'm not holding the brief for the PN but we all know what that phrase means. 'For as long as they can help it, they'll hold on to power.'

Such a blatant, public confession of undying, undimming, uncompromising power-hunger by someone still seeking to achieve it would be callous at any time. It is so transparently ugly that it really has its place in Greek tragedy or Italian opera, not in the public campaign utterances of a Western democracy. And yet here we are.

It is especially chilling considering that the remark about eternal, unchanging monopoly on power is made right on the back of the exposure of sleaze, violence, greed and corruption never before experienced at the very top of the executive of this country.

They expect us now to walk away and stay home as they go on as if nothing ever happened. We're not doing that. Our aspirations for a new Republic are clear and legitimate. We are not demanding the impossible. We are not anarchists. We believe in the State and we argue for law and its rule above anyone's interests.

But the state of the State today is diseased and our political parties appear unable or unwilling to offer solutions to start healing it. When Chris Fenne said he was "joking" when he said he'll hurry political opposition before he's buried himself, he showed just how dark his humour is. It would have had to be as he stood four-square behind Muscat for six years knowing full well what he was up to. And laughing.

When the vision of political leaders is limited to their own vaulting ambition, it is up to the people to spell out where their country is to go next.

Political parties now have a choice. They can get busy leading the new Republic, or they can get busy dying with the old one.

“When the vision of political leaders is limited to their own vaulting ambition, it is up to the people to spell out where their country is to go next”

# TALKIN' POINT

## Who are

The Prime Minister has earned the accolade of the Dodge of Ewing in his interview with Sweeney on BBC News. Months after the arrival of his most vocal critic, Ana Galizia, he is losing his grip.

Past. For some time, Prime Minister has been scenes outside the Wednesday night when you what we really think leadership is proof of the were you holding? We eager to speak to the press.

You haven't stepped since the mid-1990s. Theuma, and then the believe to be the master gen Fenech. We are what stopped you on the

Fear? But then you are assumed of a confidence, preferably by the cards telling you the Joseph' rather than the f\*\*k, Joe? Our when tightly controlled and have been used since the arrival.

Because media is a people - what we is a media circus. Pure

Castille. Pure

Who do you think you are doing, Mr Prime Minister?

You have been a stock replications

Results hold placar  
Photo: JONATHAN

you keep  
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## Alessandra Dee Crespo

Alessandra Dee Crespo is a member of the Repubblica executive committee.



# you kidding, PM?



ds at an  
test outside Castillo  
N BORG

since the Times of Malta broke the story on October 6, if not before, and only decided to embark on your song-and-dance routine when Europol came a-calling for Theuma about unrelated money-laundering charges. Then you decided to sing for your supper to save your skin.

Or so you think.

The story has long slipped from your control and you are doing your best to control the narrative trying to take the credit for the latest developments.

But let me spell it out to you. The only credit you are desperately trying not to take is your inaction

when and ever since Caruana Galizia revealed that your close associates in government opened secret companies in Panama to receive millions from a mystery Dubai company called 17 Black.

We subsequently discovered this company belongs to Fenech. Your inaction created the rule of delinquency and Impunity that led to her assassination.

Under your watch.

For two years, you have refused to lift a finger except to point it at civil society for betraying the nation with our demands for truth and justice even though you had declared that you "will leave no stone unturned". Ultimately, it was Reuters that spent half a million to uncover the identity of the owner of 17 Black. You preferred to pour money into paying Owen Bonnici's cleansers overtime to bin our protests of candles and flowers at the memorial night after night, even on the night when Fenech was arrested.

Every time that the Prime Minister steps in front of journalists to speak about the case, folks, keep in mind that he has spent most of this legislature avoiding the press and refusing to take questions.

So, why is he chatting non-stop now? Because everything is being concocted for his television audience. You know, the ones "who follow the media, my dear". Cue jangling hennaed arms and beringed fingers.

Who appointed you Police Com-

missioner, Prime Minister? You keep parroting that the institutions are working. So why are you doing the Police Commissioner's job?

So efficient are the institutions that the Police Commissioner is refusing to speak about the case and you will not stop talking about it. Will you also be judge and jury?

PM, when and where was the last time you met with Fenech? And, in case you're wondering, we're still in November. And it is shaping up quite nicely indeed.

Your mantra has always been "I will shoulder political responsibility for my decisions." Prime Minister, you have protected Keith Schembri and Konrad Mizzi to the hilt ever since Caruana Galizia uncovered their corruption.

Now we know that she was assassinated for it. It is time to shoulder your responsibility of your part in her death. Fenech is not the only villain of the piece.

Friedrich Engels's mantra was that everyone strives for his own interests, but in the end what emerges is something no one intended. You have done nothing but protect your interests.

Now brace yourself for an outcome you are not expecting. It's up to us, the people, to protect the country's interests, even if the Speaker threatens us with arrest in Freedom Square. Oh the irony.

Follow our social media platforms @repubbika and @repubbikaMT for the latest protest updates.

TOM 25.11.2019

# Muscle man Abela

MANUEL DELIA



**I** never before now has a single NGO been made the target of an orchestrated government attack launched by a prime-time press conference of the entire cabinet on national TV

Joseph Muscat ignored those who disagreed with him, driving headlong as if his will was all that mattered. That and a pumping economy boosted by the injection of EU funding and access to the eurozone, plus the resounding applause of his supporters for whom indeed he could do no wrong.

The acclamation was loud enough for him to assume the nagging detractors could be left alone as if they didn't even exist. One or two were louder than others. For Daphne Caruana Galizia and later for Simon Busuttil he needed to put in the work to isolate them, dehumanise them and eliminate any influence they might have to dilute his authority.

He also used them as sport. If they were to love him, his supporters needed effigies they could burn. He represented these 'enemies of the people' as parodies of reality, pantomime characters of pure evil, targets for popular lynching.

Never before now has a single NGO been made the target of an orchestrated government attack launched by a prime-time press conference of the entire cabinet on national TV and sustained in a daily onslaught on the Labour Party media: TVM, One TV and fellow travellers.

It is not the first time that an NGO has demanded accountability of a government for actions and decisions it took that

resulted in people's lives being put in danger or even ending in their death. The worst governments have done is arrogantly dismissed NGOs' claims or completely ignored them.

But Robert Abela felt it was time to show the country just how powerful he was, and it was time to show his party supporters they need never regret they had chosen him over his rival for people's attention, Chris Fearné.

Context is everything. Much of Abela's first 100 days was served by all of us in household isolation or social distancing. There were many

“**Never before now has a single NGO been made the target of an orchestrated government attack launched by a prime-time press conference of the entire cabinet on national TV**”



Robert Abela (left) felt it was time to show his party supporters they need never regret they had chosen him over his rival for people's attention, Chris Fearné. PHOTO: JONATHAN BORG

reasons for many of us to be unhappy about something, some reasons more serious than others. Some lost relatives, some lost their jobs, some who still have them live in insecure fear and instability. The luckier among us missed their holiday plans or their weekly five-a-side match.

COVID-19 brought the best out of leaders and officials who rose to the occasion. Abela didn't mind most of those. But as Fearné's aura continued to glow, it was obvious to anyone that if the Labour Party leadership election had happened after the COVID crisis rather than before it, no one would have beaten Fearné at the polls.

While Fearné is Abela's rival for attention, Joseph Muscat is his rival for memory. Post-COVID, Abela will preside over a weak economy exposed by all the fragilities the country ignored when the going was good. There's no space for dissenting NGOs when popularity for the government is so much more contingent.

The decision to close Malta's ports for unnecessary activity was rational. Much as we could not have planes flying tourists in, we could not have the harbour receiving cruise liners or passenger ferries.

The decision to include boats carrying people saved from drowning at sea as unnecessary activity for our ports was callous, inhumane, misguided and illegal. Our airport is closed for business but we would not tell a crashing plane to fly on into the sea instead of attempting a landing

on our airfield. And yet Abela decided to announce that people stranded at sea would not be saved.

He knew many would like that. There are many people for whom that should be our policy at all times in any case.

And there are many more whose fear of disease will make them support any policy that is presented to them as a prevention of infection.

But while a policy of ignoring the fate of migrants at sea gave Abela the demonstration match he needed to start looking tougher than Fearné, *Repubblika's* efforts to resist his decision and hold him accountable to its consequences gave him a scapegoat he could isolate and dehumanise.

The methods used by his predecessors against his nemeses were and are being applied on *Repubblika*. The state broadcaster carries misinformation and conflation of issues and outright lies, and refuses to carry replies or clarifications. The prime minister habitually communicates with the public over his party media or in events where he addresses the camera without the inconvenience of questions by journalists who do not assume he is telling the truth.

His lies include the line that "the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the government's policies were right", and that "all migrants survived", and that *Repubblika* "charged soldiers with murder" when all it did was file a report to ask for an investigation, as would be normal in a democracy when reports of

such grave wrongdoing make it to *The New York Times*.

The truth does not matter anymore. Attempting to reply, even daring to take a stand, has now become an act of sedition punishable in extraordinary ways. At a TV 'debate' on the national broadcaster, the organisation was represented by its president Prof. Vicki Ann Cremona. For daring to show up she was lynched all over Facebook. A senior government official moved from attacking the person, to attacking the university department where she works, her colleagues, her students. There was no question of attacking her argument.

Because her argument – *Repubblika's* argument – is unsailable and remains true and immutable even if Abela is successful (as his predecessor had been with his targets) to remove *Repubblika's* ability to be heard.

NGO volunteers seek no office. Their private lives and their professions suffer with the time and effort to put forward arguments that should be self-evident: all lives in danger must be saved, those who put people's lives in danger or allow them to die must face consequences, whoever they may be.

But right now, that's the furthest thing from our prime minister's mind. Instead he's choosing the best posture to demonstrate to us all that the protein he injected into his muscles from the crushed bodies of migrants and civil society volunteers make him look really, really, really strong. Stronger than Fearné. Better than Muscat.



# Malta: Why put up with this?

**Y**ou know it has been quite a momentous week in Maltese politics when Keith Schembri says he is not scared while surrounded by a small army of heavies. He scurries to a waiting car as big as a tank, when the Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, sporting a designer stubble for November, mumbles to the press that he does.

Meanwhile, Martin Scicluna pens another ode to the regime in one of the most catastrophic weeks this government has ever seen.

Headless chickens.

Apt. Because when the true head of this government, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, practically commits hara-kiri by surrendering the libel suit he had instituted against Simon Busuttil three and a half years ago, then a week is not long in Muscat's world of politics – it is interminable.

By now, you have all read a blow-by-blow account of the spectacular showdown in court last Monday. We have also heard Busuttil systematically take down the government in a speech in Parliament on Tuesday.

The government benches were empty. The members were all safely cooped up in their pens. Feathers were ruffled.

Why is Schembri's surrender so clamorous? Surely, it's not the

first time that people in government have dropped their lawsuits in court?

Only recently, politicians dropped libel suits because they did not relish their day in court to clear their name. I don't know about you, but if someone accuses me of having my hand in the cookie jar, I would think about nothing else but that moment when I clear my name in open court. Not so Minister Chris Cardona and his Acapulco suit and Minister Konrad Mizzi and his Panama company suit. And now Schembri and the 17 Black suit.

All libel suits are directly connected to Daphne Caruana Gallia's investigative work.

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Aren't you  
enraged when  
we are all called  
traitors for  
defending our  
country from  
these crooks?



"Aren't you angry that crooks are running the country?" A protestor at an anti-corruption protest held in 2016. PHOTO: DARRIN ZAMMIT LUP!

So why is Schembri's surrender so spectacular? For one main reason that needs to be emphasised and that many are missing:

A few minutes before Caruana Gallia was blown up in her car a few metres from her home, she wrote a short post about this libel suit. Her last line, "There are crooks everywhere you look now. The situation is desperate", has entered the annals of famous last lines.

One of the excuses we keep hearing is that corruption is difficult for the man in the street to understand, that offshore

companies opened by Schembri and Mizzi in Panama is too abstract a concept. That a tanker moored in Marsaxlokk is just a tanker. That people cannot make the connection between kickbacks and the black hulk blighting the bay.

When people reason that way, it is either because they have their hand in the till or because they worship at the altar of the cult of personality, or both.

Corruption is tangible. Corruption killed a flesh and blood woman. She wasn't assassinated because she wrote about food and interior decorating. People are

not killed by concepts and metaphors. People kill other people. Someone ordered to have Caruana Gallia assassinated. Murdered, because she wrote.

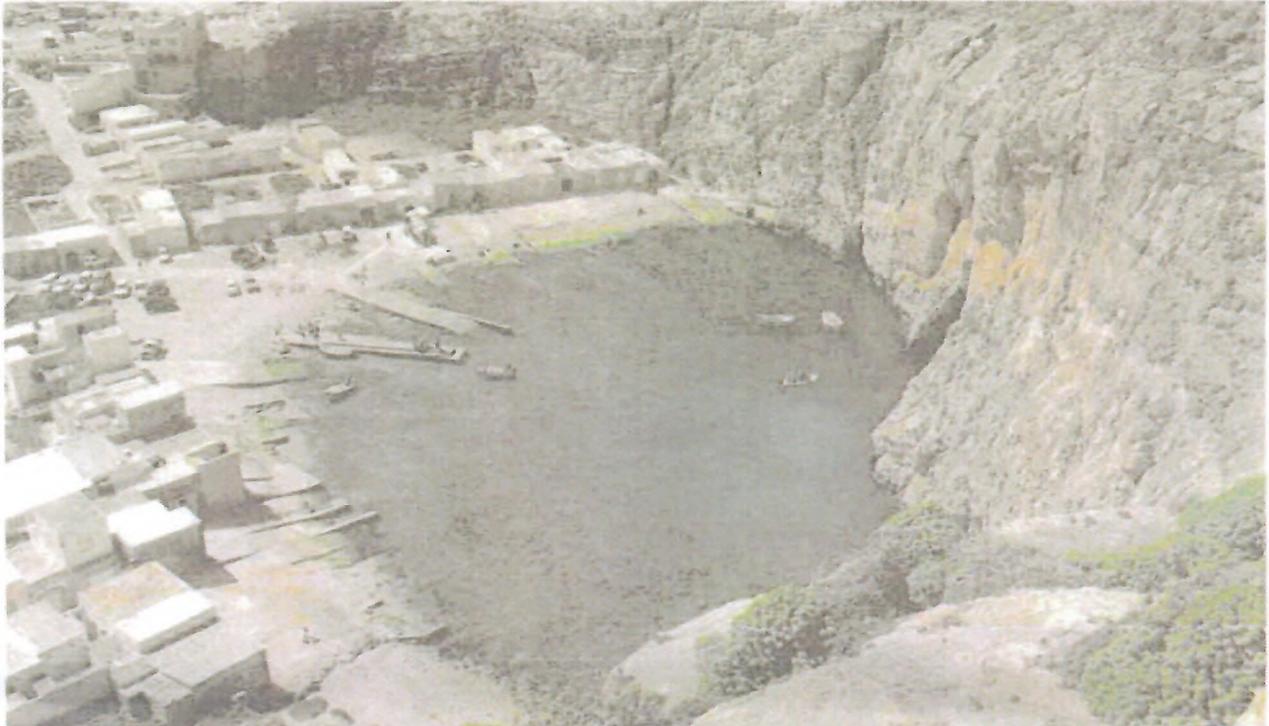
To people still sitting on the fence, how many epiphanies do you need to join this fight? Aren't you shocked and appalled that the people who should be the custodians of our heritage are robbing us blind and lying about it?

Aren't you angry that crooks are running the country? Aren't you enraged when we are all called traitors for defending our country from these crooks?

Tomorrow we take to the streets because someone who admitted to being a criminal should not be a Prime Minister's chief of staff, in any country anywhere, let alone in a country that is a member of the European Union. The Prime Minister still stands by his man. You really have to ask yourself why.

The fight for truth and justice is not a partisan issue, for democratic values belong to the people. After the fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago, Mikhail Gorbachev was asked who he regarded as the main hero of that time of drama and turmoil. "The people", he replied simply.

People, it is our time. Again. Join us tomorrow in the Protest Against Corruption. The March starts at the Old Opera House, Republic Street, Valletta, at 7pm.



NATURAL SWIMMING POOL: A bird's-eye view of the Inland Sea, in Dwejra, Gozo, a very popular spot with tourists. PHOTO: LEANDER THOMAS

## Such incompetent answers

### TALKING POINT

VICKIE ANN  
CREMONA

President,  
Repubblica



Have you ever sat in front of a television and cringed in embarrassment while watching a person talking questions? This is what happened to me as I watched our very own Minister of Tourism, Julia Farrugia Portelli, answer questions on BBC Breakfast regarding the reopening of our airports. I have not stopped thinking about that disastrous interview, which went viral and caused not only much amusement but also much concern.

I had already experienced that horrible feeling of deep embarrassment before when I watched her bumble her way through questions put by French reporters asking her about the abuses of our passport scheme. Whereas the former interview might have passed unnoticed because fewer people in Malta watch French television, this time, the BBC breakfast show was there for all Malta to see.

Farrugia Portelli did not give one straight answer to some very direct and common sense questions, foremost of

which were the following: how is Malta preparing to receive British tourists, when Britain has the worst COVID-19 infection rate in Europe; what is going to happen when a tourist steps onto our islands and falls ill; how long would the period (obviously, of quarantine) for other tourists and personnel in the same hotel be if that happens?

Her answers were so inane that the two highly professional journalists, Charlie Stayt and Nagy Munchetty, were totally justified in showing some slight impatience. Had some of us Maltese been there, we would probably have had a bigger go at her. My first reaction to the whole embarrassing interview is: why don't we prepare ministers better when we send them to represent us, all Maltese, on an international channel?

But then, after seeing the horribly typed letter and the bad English used in an official letter to the Venice Commission, I ask myself why I am asking this question. Maybe some of us could form

a volunteer team to proofread official letters in English sent to foreign entities, out of a sense of national duty, in order to avoid cringing embarrassment, especially since we live a country that advertises itself as a place to learn English.

To sum up Farrugia Portelli's answers: we have a good healthcare system; we will take temperatures at the airport; if some tourist falls ill, we will send the medical team and isolate them. Certainly nowhere near enough. Ms Farrugia Portelli! Our healthcare system has shown its efficacy during the COVID-19 outbreak because it was administered by competent people like Charmaine Gauci and Health Minister Chris Fearnle, who, at least, as far as the medical sector is concerned, knows what he is doing. Neither of the two ever insulted our intelligence by appearing before a TV camera totally unprepared.

Farrugia Portelli kept telling the world and us that "we are totally geared up" but never illuminated anyone as to what this "geared up" meant. The first solution offered: that we will take temperatures at the airport, is certainly not reassuring enough. Is that the only "protocol" we Maltese have to offer as a health precaution when faced with the onslaught of foreigners coming from a country with the highest rate of infection in Europe?

Her answer justifies the journalists' question about whether Farrugia Portelli understood anything about health statistics in the UK, which she manifestly doesn't, unless she didn't even understand the question. I would have added another question to that:

what about people who opt to stay in Malta on a B&B arrangement? How are we going to monitor them?

Farrugia Portelli went on to tell us and the world that all hotels are "COVID tested". Well, of course, they are free from COVID-19 at the moment, since they are practically empty! But how will Portelli Farrugia be protecting us, Maltese, from possible infections? By isolating a tourist if s/he develops symptoms? I would say that is the minimum. But what about the people this person comes into contact with? Are you going to place everyone in that particular hotel in quarantine, tourists and employees alike?

And, if yes, for how long? And how are you going to contact trace anyone else the tourist may have come across? If no such protocols are in place, can you please explain to us Maltese, who have patiently practically locked ourselves up for two months, what these protocols are? You owe these explanations to us before you owe them to anyone else.

We are not impressed with your solution of a "direct line to the health authorities". Thank God, in Malta, everyone has a direct line to the health authorities – and during the worst COVID-19 period, there was a special number for this.

Farrugia Portelli should stop beating about the bush. She should produce some intelligent and direct answers to the questions that we, as Maltese, deserve to have answered and address our concerns. Or get someone more competent than her to do it. Before she opens the airport to every destination.

“  
Farrugia Portelli  
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Vicki Ann Cremona is the  
President of NGII (Repubblika)

# We have a very deep problem

**M**artin Scicluna's latest contribution - 'A demoralised judiciary' - does not campaign on behalf of judges. He campaigns for the government that seeks to control them and controls him.

Repubblika filed a constitutional case challenging the democratic basis for the Prime Minister's unfettered powers of appointing judges and magistrates after the government ignored the advice of the Venice Commission to change the system. The last wave of appointments changed 13 per cent of the judiciary using a system that the world's foremost legal experts on constitutional matters said fell short of what is expected in a modern democracy.

The government failed in its duty to protect our democracy. Repubblika, as a civil society organisation concerned with the rule of law, will not fall in its duty of campaigning in any way available to it for our democracy to be protected.

This is exactly why Repubblika took the government to court. The only thing the government and its mouthpieces have to fear is the courts finding we are right.

The argument that we already had reforms to judicial appointments in 2016 is deceitful.

Our own Court of Appeal found in a recent ruling that the power of appointment of judges and magistrates before and after the 2016 so-called reforms lies, without restraint, exclusively in the hands of the Prime Minister.

The argument that the "European Commission approved our system" is both fallacious and deceitful. Fallacious because the European Commission examined our judicial system almost 20 years ago. What was OK then is not OK now.

It is also deceitful because that so-called approval was qualified. The final report of the screening of our laws before EU accession says

that "consideration could, however, be given to the possibility of further improving the objectivity of the appointment procedure, which, in the current situation, is controlled by political bodies."

Back then, it was a yellow flag. Now it's definitely red.

The consideration recommended by the EU Commission 20 years ago never happened. That is bad. Because a power that risked being abused before 2013 has been brutally exploited since.

Joseph Muscat has appointed to the bench or promoted within it a former Labour MP, a former consultant that sat at Cabinet meetings, a former Labour international secretary, the husband of a Labour MEP, three ex-Labour Party election candidates, a Labour deputy leader's daughter, two former law office partners of two former Labour deputy leaders, a veteran Labour mayor and a daughter and a sister of Labour ministers.

That forms the present massive majority of the Judiciary.

Sixty per cent of all Judges and magistrates sitting in judgement of us have a personal history that is intimately, actively and explicitly intertwined with the Labour Party.

Individually, some of them - even most of them - may be perfectly capable of forgetting their past and sit in fair judgement. But this overwhelming mobilisation of partisan appointees can only mean one thing: that citizens in dispute with the government or with individuals from the Labour Party rightly or wrongly perceive our

courts as partisan and not a fair place from which to seek and get justice. Certain decisions by Judge Giovanni Cixti, Judge Consuelo Scerri Herrera, Judge Antonio Mizzi and Judge Joanne Vella Cuschleri are inexplicable unless account is taken of their partisan affiliations.

But the real problem lies much deeper. Since 2013, the government has used its power to promote judges to secure the interests of the individuals who run it.

The promotion of Judge Anthony Vella helped the government's efforts to slow down and drag the investigation into Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination.

Even the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe noted in a report it adopted that the promotion of Judge Aaron Bugeja by Muscat came almost immediately after the then magistrate - Bugeja - had just ruled that there was no evidence that the Prime Minister and his wife were involved in a major corruption investigation.

While still in office, Judges nearing retirement live in fear of being forgotten at home by a government against whom they have taken decisions while their more accommodating colleagues are rewarded.

Judge Lino Farrugia Sacco, whose son is a Labour Party candidate, was spared impeachment by Muscat. And after dodging that bullet he was appointed chief administrator of public property.

When this happens - when the government exercises its powers of

appointment to punish judges that decide against it and reward judges that don't, or even when the threat of punishment or reward is dangled in front of them - our judiciary is not free to decide.

Scicluna says Repubblika acts this way because it is "against Adrian Delia". He is only slightly, but more than sufficiently, off the mark. It is correct to say that we would expect the Opposition leader to be campaigning against this hostile takeover of our judiciary. But we will not wait for him to snap out of his stupor.

We will do everything in our power, including going to court, to protect everybody's right to an independent justice system that protects the weakest, most vulnerable members of our society against the wrath and power of the government.

If it's elitist to work to protect the rights of the weakest among us against the overwhelming weight and power of an authoritarian government, this is a "minority cult" we are proud to belong to. Incidentally, why does he call us a cult?

Did he mean coven? Or sect? Is it now a perversion to challenge an unconstitutional law in court?

Scicluna should do the right thing, as far that matter should the anonymous judge, and insist for reform right here, right now.

If the government continues to ignore us with empty promises, then we have no choice but to challenge the courts to snap out of their own slumber and be the ones to do the right thing.

60% of all judges and magistrates sitting in judgement of us have a personal history that is intimately, actively and explicitly intertwined with the Labour Party