



Hands off referenda!

Twelve other civil society NGOs join BirdLife Malta in slamming hunting lobby's call on President to abolish this citizens' right as undemocratic

A referendum is one of the most democratic tools in any country, including Malta, and the right of voters to demand a referendum should not be hindered in any form or way.

On the other hand, the proposal by the hunting lobby to prevent the calling of an abrogative referendum in Malta and to curtail the power of voters to demand a referendum, is undemocratic and impinges negatively on citizens' rights in a democratic society.

In the past days the Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FKNK) announced [it has written to the President of Malta](#), demanding amendments to the Referenda Act as part of an ongoing public consultation about the reform of the Constitution. The hunting lobby wants the President to abolish the citizens' right to invoke a referendum under the excuse of "protecting the legal rights, interests, practices, traditions and privileges of minority groups" and their line of thought is supported by a June 2014 petition signed by 104,000 people and presented to Parliament six years ago.

But unlike any other request, in the case of a referendum the signatures collected from at least 10% of Maltese voters are rigorously checked before being accepted as a valid reason for a referendum to be held. The issue here is not solely about a small section of society that enjoy killing and trapping birds but it is also about the rest of society that are having their natural resources abused of. Our country needs to safeguard the democratic right of citizens to participate in diverse ways in the legislative process. Limiting one of the few avenues for citizen participation would be an affront to democracy, regardless of the particular issue at hand.

In view of this we call on the President of Malta, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet of Ministers to keep the country's strong democratic mechanisms intact and to ensure that Malta's legislation is not in any way tampered with to appease this undemocratic request.

*The 12 NGOs endorsing this BirdLife Malta reaction are: **Din l-Art Helwa, Nature Trust Malta-FEE, Moviment Graffiti, Friends of the Earth Malta, Futur Ambjent Wieħed, Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar (FAA), Isles of the Left, Ramblers' Association of Malta, The Archaeological Society Malta, Wirt Għawdex, Aditus Foundation, Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM).***

ENDS

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