



FEDERATION FOR HUNTING & CONSERVATION – MALTA (FKNK)

Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Malta

**Dr. Lawrence Gonzi,
Prime Minister of Malta**

resident

Malta, 27th January 2009

Honourable Prime Minister,

As Prime Minister you will no doubt remember your government's written declarations to all the Maltese hunters and trappers guaranteeing spring hunting and trapping.

May we remind you of your publicly-stated opinion that the European Court of Justice (ECJ) was the best place where the spring hunting issue could be settled once and for all, and that you would abide by the Court's ruling.

As you are no doubt aware, the ECJ judgment justified limited spring hunting. It also put paid to BirdLife's claims on the conservation status of turtle-doves and quails, and the inadequacy of the autumn season as a satisfactory alternative solution to spring hunting and trapping. The judicious decision of the European court amply vindicated your government's arguments that the two bird-species enjoy a healthy conservation status in the wild, and most importantly, that in the particular case of Malta, autumn is not a satisfactory alternative solution to spring hunting.

May we remind you that the ECJ judgement is final and definitive, demolishes the main contention of the EU Environment Commission, and makes the opening of a spring hunting and trapping season by the Maltese government a justified necessity for the Maltese hunters and trappers.

May we point out that BirdLife Malta's present campaign, featuring an orchestrated anti-spring hunting petition, stems from their refusal to accept and abide by the findings of the European Court of Justice. The illegal shooting of protected bird species was never, and at no point, part of the ECJ case, and is irrelevant to the issue. We are certain that you will recognize it for what it is, the manipulative confusing of public opinion by an organization that plainly thinks it knows best.

Nevertheless, may we remind you that the ECJ ruling has highlighted your government's ethical and moral obligation to do justice to all the hunters and trappers and their families. We urge you, therefore, to transpose the decision of the European Court of Justice allowing limited spring hunting and trapping of Turtle-dove and Quail, and to implement the court judgement by enacting the necessary Maltese legislation.

Assuring you once more of our full backing, we urge you also to ensure the strict enforcement of the hunting regulations without fear or favour.

In the interest of justice and transparency, we urge you to do the right thing for the law-abiding hunters of Malta and their families, with their full backing and on the strength of the ECJ judgement. The Maltese hunters' status as equal citizens within the EU, now endorsed by none other than Europe's top judicial body, expects that you apply the spring-hunting derogation fully in terms of the Birds Directive, no more and no less.

Yours faithfully,
Joseph Buttigieg