

Open letter to the Minister of Education

**The Honorable Mr. Evarist Bartolo B.A.(Hons.), M.Ed.(Wales), M.P.
Ministry for Education and Employment,
Great Siege Road
Floriana**

January 31, 2014

Honorable Minister,

We would like to draw your attention to the recent examination question (Doc 1 attached) included in an Environmental Studies examination and another question in the 2012 secondary schools annual exams (Doc2) which are just two of several similar biased questions against hunting and trapping upon which children are examined.

It has long been our concern that children in our schools are being indoctrinated against hunting and trapping by teachers under the Dinja Wahda programme. This programme run by Birdlife Malta in partnership with Bank of Valletta is part of their commitment to environmental education and accounts for the majority of Birdlife Membership being school children. Since the past administration was content with such an arrangement and so it seems is this Government, we will not delve into how or why a society, whose interest is the protection of birds, has been entrusted with environmental education or that it benefits from a Bank's funding and membership fees from the children being "educated". However it is amply clear that children in our schools are not being given a chance to form their own opinion about hunting and trapping and are being subjected to the ideals of a bird protection society. The attached exam questions, though Birdlife Malta publicly proclaim they are not against hunting, undoubtedly prove that children's educators are even portraying legal hunting and trapping as a hindrance to the public or as damage to our countryside and influencing young minds accordingly.

As representatives of part of the hunting fraternity we can vouch for several instances where children have referred to their fathers as murderers simply because they have been taught that hunting is wrong. We can also refer to many cases where children who tried to justify their father's hunting were shunned by their classmates or even ridiculed by their teachers.

Referring to the Government's letter of understanding on legal hunting before the last election, where hunters in Malta are to be given an equal footing as those in the EU, and to the opposition's acceptance of hunting we look forward to the day when our children can participate in our legal activities no less than their young counterparts in the EU. Under the current circumstances, where an honest unbiased reply from a hunter's child could even mean a loss of examination marks, we are faced with a new

generation of children that have been conditioned to abhor our legal practices with the blessings of our Education Department and Government or at worst, children shunned or penalized for wanting to follow their father's footsteps.

Though we do not expect Government to dismiss the bird protectionists that for years have hijacked our environmental educational system, we are convinced that it is not Government's intention to permit the blatant biased education given to children where sustainable legal hunting and trapping are concerned.

Subsequently we solicit Government to ensure that our children are educated in a manner that makes a clear distinction between the legal practice of sustainable hunting and trapping and the despicable illegal acts against protected birds. For this purpose we offer our services as educators on hunting and trapping to the Education Department to be included in the curriculum on Environmental Studies since we firmly believe our children are entitled to the right to form their own opinion free from one-sided indoctrination.

Given that our hunting organization unlike the bird protection society does not benefit from any bank's sponsorship, cannot afford to employ numerous full time staff or has not received close to three million euro in other funding, should the Education Department opt not to cover our expenses we are prepared to offer this service paid for from our own pockets.

We trust we are given a meeting in due course to discuss the matter further.

Mark Mifsud Bonnici
President