

Freedom of information White Paper to be published

By MaltaMedia News
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Following the setting up of a Journalists' Committee to defend press freedoms, the government has confirmed that by the end of 2006, it will be publishing a White Paper on freedom of information following a period of public consultation on the Government's proposals.

In fact, interested parties wishing to propose any ideas for inclusion in the legislation are to send their submissions to the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister, Valletta CMR 02, or by e-mail on pps@gov.mt.

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the Institute of Maltese Journalists (Istitutt tal-Ĵurnalisti Maltin - IGM) is making a formal call on the government of Malta to ensure that the country will have a Freedom of Information Act.

This law is required in a democratic society because, apart from in instances where there is a threat to national security and in other exceptional cases, it would open wide to public scrutiny and to the press all information of a public nature to which the people has the right of access.

The Journalists' Committee, set up on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, also said it would be campaigning for a Freedom of Information Act and is also planning to organise a national seminar on Freedom of Information this year.

On a day to day basis, the Committee will be monitoring statements made by public figures concerning journalism and freedom of the press and about its members, new laws, regulations and decisions of government and public institutions that are of relevance to journalism, pending libel cases, court decisions and sentences.

http://www.maltamedia.com/news/2005/ln/article_9873.shtml

IGM calls for Freedom of Information Act

by di-ve news

VALLETTA, Malta (di-ve news) -- May 03, 2006 -- 1825CEST --On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, the Institute of Maltese Journalists (IGM) called on government to implement a Freedom of Information Act.

The Institute said that this law is required in a democratic society because, apart from in instances where there is a threat to national security and in other exceptional cases, it would open wide to public scrutiny and to the press all information of a public nature to which the people has the right of access.

"The next step is for the right of a free media in our country to be strengthened through full access to information."

The Institute also expressed its full solidarity with the families of more than 58 journalists who lost their lives during 2005 around the world and with the families of hundreds of other journalists who were kidnapped in countries where there is a conflict situation or put unjustly in jail.

Meanwhile in a press statement, the government pointed out that in the Pre-Budget Document, it has already stated that it will publish a White Paper on freedom of information by the end of 2006.

The government said that it remains committed to this timeframe and that there will be a period of public consultation on the government's proposals following the publication of this White Paper.

Journalists' Committee set up to defend press freedoms

By Giselle Borg Olivier
May 2, 2006, 08:07 CET

A new organization is to be set up on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, by journalists from the majority of Maltese media organizations. The Journalists' Committee is being formed to fight for journalists' rights and defend press freedoms.

The Journalists' Committee is made up of working journalists, editors, freelance writers, and opinion makers who share the democratic ideals of the free press.

The Committee will be campaigning for a Freedom of Information Act, a Whistleblower Act, an overhaul of the Press Act and libel laws, and plans to organise a national seminar on Freedom of Information this year.

On a day to day basis, the Committee will be monitoring statements made by public figures concerning journalism and freedom of the press and about its members, new laws, regulations and decisions of government and public institutions that are of relevance to journalism, pending libel cases, court decisions and sentences.

"On this day, we join thousands of colleagues worldwide in honouring the sacrifices made for freedom of the press, and in reminding governments of their duty to respect and uphold the right to freedom of _expression as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," said Committee spokesman Massimo Farrugia.

The theme proposed for this year by the World Association of Newspapers is: "Don't lock up information: Stop Jailing Journalists". A total of 58 journalists were murdered last year, and more than 500 were arrested.

"Beyond this symbolic day, we intend to take this seriously," Farrugia added. "While incarceration of journalists and editors in Malta is luckily a thing of the past, the present libel laws, lack of freedom of information, and arbitrary access to information of public relevance remain among the serious issues we face everyday in our duty to inform the public."

The Committee expresses its solidarity with the victims of arson attacks, targeted because of their work with immigrants and for taking a public stand for tolerance and diversity.

"These cowardly attacks are also attacks on the right to freedom of expression," Farrugia said. "It is shocking that the hatred towards people of diverse cultures has now extended to the violent intolerance towards different opinions." C Copyright 2006 - MaltaMedia Online Network