The Government has issued a statement taking note of the judgement handed down by the First Hall Civil Court regarding 32 persons who were rescued at sea during a situation of national emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in April and May 2020.

The Court judgement has recognised that the decision of the Maltese Government was taken in the national interest in an extraordinary scenario which the country had never experienced before. The Government welcomes the Court’s observation that the decisions taken by the Maltese authorities to detain groups of irregular migrants at sea was taken because of the situation caused by the pandemic, including the closure of ports, the airport, and the closure of migrant centres.

The Government stated that the Court took into account the claims of 9 out of 32 applicants. Furthermore, the Court expressed itself convinced that the Government acted in good faith and that it definitely did not have any premeditated plans to degrade or treat the applicants in an inhumane manner. In fact, these persons were given access to the asylum procedure as soon as they entered Maltese territory. The Government had absolutely no intention to impede the rights of these persons as asylum seekers, and in fact some of these persons involved in this court case were relocated to other EU countries or have been returned to their country. While the Government takes note of the criticism expressed by the Court on the sanitary facilities on board the vessels and the space provided to sleep, one needs to also note that the Court did not take note of the allegations made by the applicants regarding the medical care they have been given and the basic needs that were met, including food, clothing and blankets.

Finally, the Government reiterates that the decisions that were taken, and are still taken, on irregular migration are aimed at strengthening the security of Malta and to reduce the number of irregular arrivals with full respect for human rights and Malta’s international obligations.

**Source(s)**

- Government of Malta | Gvern ta' Malta (10 April, 2025), PR250595 10/04/2025 STQARRIJA MILL-GVERN TA’ MALTA Is-sentenza tal-Qorti fuq il-każ tal-immigranti miżmuma fuq vapuri fl-2020 tikkonferma li d-deċiżjonijiet tal-Gvern ittieħdu fl-interess nazzjonali [PR250595 10/04/2025 STATEMENT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF MALTA The court ruling on the case of migrants held on ships in 2020 confirms that the Government’s decisions

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

were taken in the national interest],
https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2025/04/10/pr250595.

**Date of development**
10.04.2025
**Country**
Malta
**Thematic area(s)**
Access to territory
**Development type**
Practice

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.