



# MALTA REFUGEE COUNCIL



KUNSILL MALTI GĦAR-RIFUĠJATI

5 JUNE 2025

## Press Statement: “Refugees deserve protection, not prosecution!”

The Malta Refugee Council is speechless at recent news of the arrest, prosecution and judicial procedures of a group of unhoused refugees. Information available recounts how, together with others, they were arrested by immigration officials and readily charged with being unable to secure their own livelihood and shelter. They risk spending months in prison, further aggravating their vulnerabilities and doing absolutely nothing to secure their protection.

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According to the United Nations, most studies find that at least one out of three refugees meet diagnostic criteria for depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders. The experience of being stripped from their communities is in itself deeply traumatic, often leaving refugees without any of the support structures we too often take for granted: family, friends, organisations, police, social services, health providers, etc.

In many cases, the journey towards safety aggravates this experience as it is often accompanied by incidents of violence, abuse and discrimination. Most refugees in Malta were forced to face the added hurdle of a perilous sea journey that every year leaves hundreds dead or lost.

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Unhoused people, including refugees and asylum seekers, are often a result of gaps in national protection systems. They are often

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amongst the most vulnerable members of our communities who struggle to do even the most basic of tasks. They need understanding, compassion, support and guidance. Whilst we appreciate the challenges their situations present to the Government we nonetheless underline that they should never be abandoned, ignored or punished.



This week's prosecution of unhoused refugees is an unacceptable show of force by the Government, flexing its muscles against the weakest amongst us. Furthermore, we question the wisdom or fairness of a judicial system that failed to listen to their individual stories, that did not query their circumstances and backgrounds.

Refugees deserve protection, not prosecution. The same of course applies to Maltese and other nationals in this difficult circumstances. It is our duty to stand up for them, with them.

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