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GORDON GILTRAP
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MAN ALLEGES BRUTAL POLICE BEATING BEFORE DYING

A MAN whom police claimed escaped a police escort and fell down the bastions beneath the Floriana police HQ, said on his deathbed he was beaten up by his interrogating police officers and thrown off the bastions, MaltaToday can confirm.

Nicholas Azzopardi, from Floriana, was 38 years old when he died five days ago. A day later on the 9 April, police issued a statement stating a man had escaped from police HQ, jumped over a wall overlooking the trade school behind the HQ, and taken to hospital where he was in danger of dying.

When 13 days later, Azzopardi came to his senses and regained his ability to talk, he recounted his tragic ordeal. Three hours before his death, Magistrate Tonio Vella was questioning him over allegations that he had been beaten up while in police custody, then thrown off the bastions beneath the police depot. He even said he was in a position to recognise the officers, but he recalled the two police officers having no visible police numbers on their epaulets.

The shocking allegations have been kept under wraps. The police did not give any

details about the victim's allegations but when contacted yesterday, Home Affairs and Justice Minister Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici confirmed that the magistrate had interrogated Azzopardi shortly before his death.

The minister said Police Commissioner John Rizzo had not informed him about the case and that he was only aware of it through the scant press reports carrying the official police statement. However, after checking with Rizzo yesterday, Mifsud Bonnici confirmed that police officers were also

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Nicholas Azzopardi died after allegedly being beaten up by police and thrown from the bastions behind the CID offices in Floriana

Jason Micallef believed MLP would win by 4%

CLAUDE Falzon was the man behind mistaken polls which had Labour leader Alfred Sant and secretary-general Jason Micallef believe Labour would win the election by 4% or 12,000 votes.

The polls were known only to Sant and Micallef, and campaign manager Benny Borg Bonello. None of the party's top officials were given the precise figures, but simply told that Labour was heading towards "a comfortable win". Labour would lose the election by some 1,600 votes, even

though the Nationalists today are only effectively governing with one extra seat in parliament.

Claude Falzon, who is based in Brussels as a translator, was also instrumental in rubbishing other public polls namely the MaltaToday polls which recorded a small but significant majority for the PN in the run-up to the election.

Labour's lead started to waver when MaltaToday's survey registered a slight 1.8% lead for the PN between Monday 18 and Wednesday 20 February, as Lawrence Gonzi started intensifying his onslaught on Labour's reception class proposal – the proposal had itself been drawn up simply as an attempt to allow for overtime for staff in schools.

Ironically the Labour proposal was fished out from its voluminous electoral programme

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Joseph Muscat tells Sant to 'lay off'

LABOUR leadership contender Joseph Muscat has relayed a message to former leader Alfred Sant to "lay off", warning that any political comeback by Sant would be interpreted as a sign of support for Muscat.

The young MEP has been keen on shaking off the perception he is Sant's 'poodle', as the unenviable moniker goes, by warding off any attempt by the former leader to return to the fold.

Sant's sudden appearance at

a Labour national executive meeting last Monday was interpreted as having been "unhelpful" for Muscat, after Sant practically chaired the meeting after having met Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi that day to discuss a pairing agreement for parliament.

Then on Tuesday, Alfred Sant gave his only public comment since his resignation to MaltaToday Midweek, hitting out at former deputy leader George Abela, a leadership contend-

er, who claimed Labour had planned a "convergence" policy on the EU back in 1997. Sant discredited Abela's claim.

The other contenders for the leadership post have truly fomented the widely held perception of Muscat being Sant's man. Labour heavyweight George Vella, a former deputy leader and foreign minister, is openly backing Muscat, as are many of Sant's acolytes such as Labour lawyer Pawlu

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