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VOTING AT 16? PG 16

After MaltaToday's revelations

OPM BACKTRACKS ON GALEA ULTIMATUM

The Office of the Prime Minister says letter was issued without Lawrence Gonzi's knowledge

**JAMES DEBONO
RAPHAEL VASSALLO**

THE Office of the Prime Minister yesterday announced it was backtracking on its order to Alternattiva Demokratika secretary-general Victor Galea to resign his political post if he wanted to remain employed in the civil service – just two days after MaltaToday broke the news.

Last Sunday, this newspaper reported that a letter sent from the Office of the Prime Minister had instructed the permanent secretary in the Gozo Ministry to inform Galea that as a “teacher”, he “may not hold the post of Secretary General of AD.”

Acting upon the OPM’s instructions, the Gozo Ministry duly informed Galea that he had until last Friday – the Santa Marija holiday – to decide on whether he intends to continue serving as AD’s secretary-general.

In a further twist to the story, the OPM said that the letter to

Victor Galea and two officials of Alleanza Nazzjonali (see page 4), were issued without the knowledge of the Prime Minister or senior OPM officials, first learning about it when they received questions from MaltaToday.

The two AN officials, the vice-president and treasurer of the party, have since resigned their political posts.

A spokesperson for the OPM yesterday told MaltaToday the case was prompted by a “bureaucrat who had gone by the book” in issuing the letter to Galea.

The spokesperson said the action had not been mandated at a political level. “The OPM ordered that the letter be suspended and for the position to be reviewed. As you know there are other people who have positions in the civil service while occupying political posts.”

Yesterday, Labour leader Joseph Muscat also told MaltaToday he fully supported Galea.

Joseph Muscat asked why Victor Galea had being singled out,

acknowledging that officials in his own party are in breach of the anachronistic code.

“One has to see whether this is a case of over-zealousness on the part of some bureaucrat... what is sure is that there are other people in Galea’s position in the PN, the MLP and even other officials in AD who have not been told to give up their jobs,” Muscat told MaltaToday.

Muscat also referred to the creation of a parallel public service, composed of ministerial secretariats, quangos and authorities which are not covered by public service regulations. “We cannot afford to have two parallel services, one guided by strict regulations precluding any sort of political activity, and another parallel service which contains no such regulations.”

Muscat called for a revision of the rules. “We want a modern and more liberal society where the

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Dutch inmate dumped by legal aid

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

PERRY Ingumar Toornstra, the 32-year-old Dutch national who was allegedly beaten at the Corradino Correctional

facility (CCF) last week after attempting to escape, has been forced to find alternative legal representation after the lawyer appointed by the court failed to show up for his hearing.

Officials at the Dutch em-

bassy yesterday confirmed that Toornstra turned to his country’s diplomatic mission for help to find another lawyer, while sources close to CCF told this newspaper that “this sort of thing happens all the

time”.
“Lawyers on legal aid are notorious for ‘dumping’ their clients, especially foreigners in prison,” one prison employee, who asked to remain anonymous, said yesterday. Else-

where, prisoners’ rights watchdog Mid-Dlam Ghad-Dawl has on numerous occasions shed light on this issue, demanding a reform in the way lawyers are assigned to clients in detention.

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