

# IS AZZOPARDI ABOVE THE LAW?

No action taken by Attorney General over inquiry into the illegal reflagging of fishing boats, that found "false information" was tendered by fishing magnate's company

## RAPHAEL VASSALLO

THE Attorney General's office has since 16 June been sitting on an inquiry report suggesting serious breaches of local and international law on the part of Hannibal Fishing Ltd – a company 100% owned by Azzopardi Fisheries – but no criminal proceedings have so far been initiated against the company or its proprietors.

The report was forwarded to AG Dr Silvio Camilleri by Transport Minister Austin Gatt on the advice of the board of inquiry itself, which pointed out that "the Ministry should seek the assistance of the Attorney General."

The inquiry was instigated by allegations of illegal double-registration of fishing vessels in the Grand Harbour, right under the noses of the port authorities.

It seems a European Commission delegation, in Malta on routine business on 22 April, received a phone-call from the Commission requesting information about a suspicious flagging



Charles Azzopardi

activity being carried out in the Grand Harbour at the time. It is understood that the Commission's attention was drawn to the incident by international conservation agencies Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund, which photographed the entire op-

eration.

The vessels were the Libyan-flagged Manara I and Manara 2, owned by Hannibal Fishing Ltd, and the Abdi Baba I and Cevahir, purchased from Tur-

key by Hannibal Fishing Ltd, together with French associates, last March.

The purpose of the exercise appears to have been to replace two registered and licensed (but obsolete) tuna fishing vessels with another two modern (but unlicensed) boats. But rather than register the new boats with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), Hannibal Fishing Ltd simply swapped their identities so that the two new boats took the names (and licenses) of the old.

All four vessels are currently impounded in Libya and Malta.

The Board of Inquiry con-

cluded its investigation on 10 June, and the findings were tabled in parliament (and forwarded to the AG) on six days later.

Among the conclusions were the following: "False information was tendered by representatives of Hannibal Fishing Ltd to the Ministry of Resources and Rural Affairs (MRRRA); that Anthony Azzopardi and Charles Azzopardi were economical with the truth (in their interviews with the Board); and that "the declarations which were false related to the year of build, engines and dimensions of the ships".

To put into perspective the seriousness of these allegations, the

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## Prison director resigns in 'star' inmate row

HOT on the heels of press reports that prison inmate Leli Camilleri, 'il-Bully', acted as a middleman on behalf of inmates, Police Superintendent Sandro Gatt – the director of the Corradino Correctional Facility – has submitted a formal request to be reassigned to the Police Corps.

A Department of Information statement yesterday announced that the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs had accepted the

request.

His resignation came on Monday, a day after the ministry launched a probe into the prison director's practice of having Camilleri act as intermediary for Dutch inmate Perry Ingumar Toornstra, the failed prison escapee who is now at the centre of allegations concerning prison guard abuse.

Camilleri is a convicted drug trafficker, serving 35 years for planting a bomb outside the

home of Assistant Police Commissioner Michael Cassar.

Prison director Sandro Gatt himself admitted to The Sunday Times that Camilleri's role was more or less standard procedure in prison.

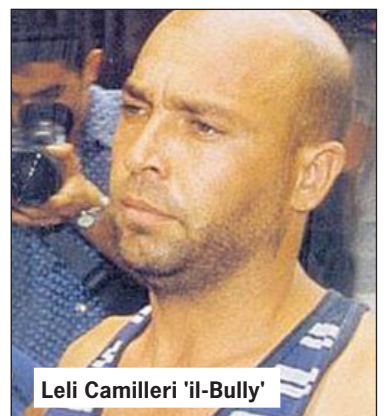
Another prisoner, Tunisian Mohsen Mosbah, took care of Arab prisoners' complaints.

Even the former chairman of the prison board Mario Felice was quoted as saying that Camilleri "leads a very promi-

nent role in the prison. He enjoys a lot of things which others do not, including access to the prison director..."

Police Inspector Abraham Zammit, the prison's deputy director, was appointed agent director at Corradino.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has also appointed Mr Emanuel Cassar to head an independent board to investigate reports on alleged shortcomings at the prisons.



Leli Camilleri 'il-Bully'





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