

mid week

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SPECIAL FEATURE



## TIME FOR A RETHINK



With local and international research suggesting more problem drug use and increased available of illicit substances, this year's publication of a National Drugs Policy couldn't have been better timed. **MaltaToday Midweek** analyses various aspects of the so-called 'war on drugs'

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## SHOT IN THE HEAD

BirdLife ranger targeted for second time in two years

FORESTA 2000 ranger Ray Vella has suffered a second attack by a gun-wielding aggressor at the afforestation site he manages in Mellieha.

Vella was attacked at 6am yesterday morning when he was shot in the head and right ear by an aggressor with a shotgun. In 2007, he was shot by an aggressor while tending to his own field in Wied il-Mizieb. In both cases the shot contained lead pellets, which rarely causes life-threatening injuries but can easily blind the victim or result in infection.

Vella, a long-time member of BirdLife, has been the ranger of the Foresta 2000 site in Mellieha for the last four years, personally tending to the trees near the Red Tower, where 3,000 saplings were felled by vandals

in May 2007. Yesterday, he had just arrived at the west end of the Foresta 2000 afforestation site when he found the gate of the project site forced open and the padlock broken. He got out of his jeep to shut the gate, leaving the engine running and the lights on.

At that point he was shot in the head and ear by an aggressor hidden in nearby trees.

"We believe that this is no accident and Ray was ambushed by someone who was waiting for him," BirdLife Malta president Joseph Mangion said during a press conference organized at the Din l-Art Helwa headquarters in Valletta.

"It was dawn and the lights of his jeep were on when he was inspecting the gate and the broken padlock."

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