



THE 'GENDER BALANCE REFORM' FOR THE MALTESE PARLIAMENT

**A historical, sociological
justification from a feminist
perspective.**

Prof. Carmen Sammut
carmen.Sammut@um.edu.mt

“
**Human rights are
women's rights
and women's rights
are human rights,
once and for all.**

”

- Hillary Clinton
Beijing, 1995

Women's under-representation in most Parliaments does not merely limit women's fundamental democratic rights but the wider human rights too, including the rights of other politically marginalized social groups.

Shvedova, Nadezhda



Feminism and Citizenship

Rian Voet



FEMINIST AUTHOR R. VOET

“We should suspect a system of representation that routinely restricts power to a particular group, usually middle-aged and older men”.



Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) rankings

142	Bahrain	11.2018	40	6	15.0
143	Malaysia	05.2018	222	33	14.9
144	Ghana	12.2020	275	40	14.6
145	India	04.2019	540	78	14.4
146	Cyprus	05.2021	56	8	14.3
"	Côte d'Ivoire	03.2021	252	36	14.3
148	Guinea-Bissau	03.2019	102	14	13.7
➤ 149	Malta	06.2017	67	9	13.4
150	Zambia	08.2021	155	20	12.9
151	Bahamas	05.2017	39	5	12.8
"	Central African Republic	12.2020	133	17	12.8
"	Democratic Republic of the Congo	12.2018	500	64	12.8
154	Belize	11.2020	32	4	12.5

Lack of progress resulted in Malta slipping down on the **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) rankings**, where it is now in the 149th place out of 193 nations (2021).

Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%) - World, Malta, Rwanda, European Union, Sweden

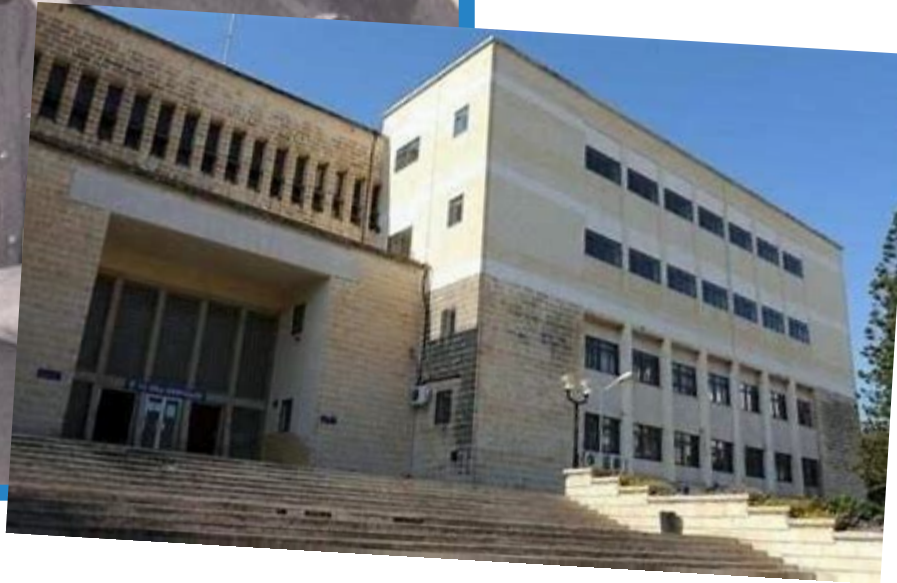
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (ipu.org). For the year of 2020, the data is as of October 1, 2020. For the year of 1998, the data is as of August 10, 1998.

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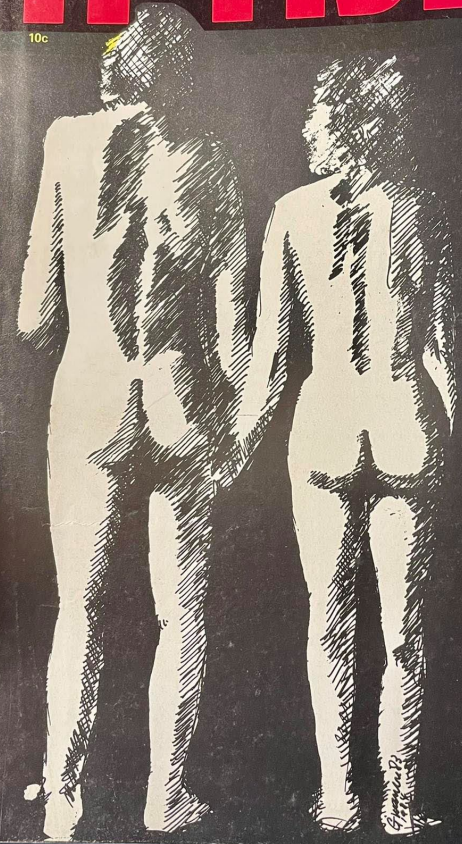
SELF IN THE STORY



il-ħsieb

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int jiew flusek?

X JISWA:

XENA SOĊJALI

FAMILJA SAGRA

MSIBIJET MILL-GARIGORI TA' MOHHI, MOHHOK U MOHHHA...

ID-DINJA TAGHNA WKOLL!

— Minn —
KARMENA TUMASI

SIER biezal, omm twajba, ulied bil-... tisthajlhom tas-santi!!! Din il-... ideali nisimghu hafna dwarha, ehed u wahda minna xi darba xtaq f'din it-tip ta' familja tajba. Ollu l-kuncett tal-familja gie f'niċċa u gie merfugh 'il boghod f'ftit huma dawk li jazzardaw dan il-kuncett tant nobbli.

Sa jistennew li nhallu għaqda tal-familja rridu naghmlu **KULL** e inzommu l-familja Infatti ahna ngħixu ekk il-familja tikksin tort tagħna. Hu hu l-familja, li n nirrangaw darba, rgu 'l barra mid- li l-familja ma gstant tajjeb u klu li l-familja wkoll tikksier. 'kissru l-istat r niehdu ħsieb għu marbuta arhom matul siegħa tal-

xogħol meħtieġ il-familji kienu jippruvaw jtkatru kemm jista' jkun. Din it-tip ta' familja primitiva, it-tip tat-tribù għadha teżisti f'dawk l-inhawi l-aktar miftuma mill-industrijalizzazzjoni.

Aktar ma għadda z-zmien l-individwi aktar bdew iħossu l-bżonn li johorġu miċ-ċirku familjari sakemm mal-wasla tar-rivoluzzjoni industrijali l-individwi kellhom johorġu jaħdmu ma' mijiet ta' haddiema ohra fil-fabbriki, biex jiksbu l-ghixien tagħhom. Issa l-ghixien beda jiddependi mix-xogħol kollettiv tal-proletarjat fuq il-post tax-xogħol. Madankollu baqa' jeżisti l-kuncett tal-familja nukleari. Minhabba l-firxa tad-**"division of labour"** il-bżonn

ta' familji enormi ma baqax jinħass u l-fatt li l-mara wkoll bdiet tqatta' siegħat barra mid-dar għen biex jibdwew jonqsu n-numru tat-tfal.

Bil-mod il-mod il-livell tal-edukazzjoni f'diversi pajjiżi beda jgħola u aktar nies beda jkollha ċ-ċans titgħallim. Dan wassal għal bidliet fil-mod ta' kif wiehed iħares lejn il-familja. Barra minnekk issa z-zgħażaġh bdew jimmatraw qabel u billi l-paġi bdew ikunu biżżejjed għalihom biex jgħixu, hafna bdew jagħzlu li jgħixu għal rashom, indipendentament mill-familja tagħhom.

Sadattant wara t-tieni Gwerra Dinjija aktar u aktar nisa fl-Ewropa u l-pajjiżi industrijalizzati bdew johorġu mill-kċina u minhabba

XENA SOĊJALI

l-bżonn ekonomiku tal-familja jagħtu l-kontribut tagħhom fuq il-postijiet tax-xogħol. Hawn bdew jiltaqgħu mal-problemi li qabel kienu jiltaqgħu magħhom l-irġiel biss u bdew jifirxu l-interessi tagħhom f'diversi oqsma. Barra minn hekk komplet kibret il-ġlieda għal drittijiet indaqs f'diversi oqsma, ġlieda li laqget il-quccata tagħha fis-sin sittin.

Illum f'hafna pajjiżi, in-numru ta' separazzjonijiet u divorzji żdied. Dan ma jfissirx li s-socjetà sejra lura fil-valuri tagħha. Ir-rata ta' divorzju qed tikber għax illum f'hafna pajjiżi tista' tinfired. Dan għall-kuntrarju għal dak li jgħi f'pajjiżi bħal Malta fejn id-divorzju ma jeżistix u hu diffiċli hafna tiehru s-separazzjoni. F'pajjiżi bħal Malta ma tistax tiehru id-divorzju, imma dan bl-ebda mod ma jindika li f'Malta iż-żwiggijiet huma hienja mija fil-mija. Koppla li tkun qed tgħix f'diffikultajiet familjari ma tista' tirringa bl-ebda mod is-sitwazzjoni li tkun qed tgħix fiha u din żgur li mhix sitwazzjoni ideali. Żgur li b'hekk ma jfissirx li f'artna s-socjetà tgawdi xi valuri aqwa minn ta' għnus ohra.

Barra minn hekk f'hafna pajjiżi barranin in-nisa qed johorġu jaħdmu u dan ma jhallix lill-mara dipendenti għal kolloxx fuq zewgħa. Dan ifisser li jekk mara jkollha titlob id-divorzju ma tispicċax lampa stampa. Barra minn hekk l-idea li mara għandha bżonn raġel biex jiddefendiha f'socjetà ostili, illum bdiet tinqata'. Tajjeb li ngħidu wkoll illi li kieku kellu jidhol id-divorzju f'artna jew inkella kieku s-separazzjoni kellha ssir aktar faċli, minkejja t-tbatija li jistgħu jkun qed jgħixu fiha, ftit ikunu n-nisa li jħarsu lejn id-divorzju bħala soluzzjoni. Dan għax ma jkunux imdorrija jaħdmu biex jaqilgħu hobżhom minhabba li l-mentalità dominanti għadha didetta li mara għandha thalli x-xogħol li ikollha s-

dipendenti fuq is-socjetà sa minn l-ewwel siegħat tal-hajja. Il-fatt li hafna tfal qed jitrabbew fl-ambjent tal-kindergarten u nursery qed jgħin lit-tfal jambjentaw irwieħhom għal dan il-fatt għax jitgħallmu jaqsmu ma' shabhom, ma' familja akbar - il-komunità.

Madankollu s-socjetà mhix magħmula biss mill-familji. Jekk nagħtu harsa madwarna naraw li mhux kulhadd igħix f'familja komposta minn omm, missier u l-ulied. Bhal f'pajjiżi ohra (għalkemm forsi b'rati

tfal imv li trad illegitti mingħu poġġu jgħixu famil jaqsn istess jew l F' tal- leg kol





It-tpingijiet ta' John Baldacchino, li kien jiffirma bhala "Gwanni", wara kienu gew stampati f'fuljett li konna bagħtna lill-membri kollha nisa tal-union. Kienu tpingijiet effettivi li juru d-diffikultajiet tal-haddiema nisa

100
YEARS





THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: THE POLITICAL INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN

In 1918, British women acquired the right to vote and to contest elections



In Valletta, a National Assembly that convened in 1919 to discuss a new self-government Constitution, excluded women.



EVA HUBBACK



“In view of the fact that women’s suffrage has now been granted in all the Dominions and that the Legislative Council in India has the right to grant the franchise to Indian women **It appeared to be a most retrograde step that the women of Malta should not be enfranchised.**”

(To the Colonial Office, 1921)

MANWEL DIMECH



The struggle for self-determination to be intrinsically linked with women's liberation.

“The right to vote is one of expressing one's right to self-determination and this is everyone's birth right... Rise, Maltese woman! Join in the struggle of fellow women in other countries.”

(1st October 1902)

Exiled during World War I. Died in 1921 in an Egyptian prison.

MABEL STRICKLAND: 1931'S PETITION



Pleaded before a Royal Commission on Maltese Affairs proposing amendments to the Constitution of 1921 to “consider the equity of bringing the political status of the women of Malta more into line with that enjoyed by the women of English and other self-governing units of the British Commonwealth”

(Times of Malta, 21 May 1931)

WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II



“Air raid warden Mary Ellul rescued people from under the rubble” S. Cusens.

Men were conscripted and women filled the void even in those areas that were previously male domains, such as the Dockyard.

Civil society was empowered: women-led relief committees supported the war effort at a local, regional and in some cases even at a national level.

REGGIE MILLER



Secretary General of the GWU (founded in 1943)
then the biggest social movement:

Editor of its weekly bi-lingual newspaper *The Torch*,

Secretary of the National Assembly that discussed
responsible government and drafted the 1947
Constitution.

Advised *Women of Malta Association* to quickly set up
and gain a voice in the Assembly.

JOSEPHINE BURNS DE BONO & HÉLÈNE BUHAGIAR



Women of Malta Association

- To enlist sympathy for equal political rights i.e. universal suffrage at twenty-one years of age.
- To nominate candidates to the National Assembly discussing new Constitution for Malta.



MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

1945-1947	Chronology
2nd meeting	Objection to Ms Strickland's presence in Assembly ignored.
3rd meeting March 2, 1945	National Assembly accepted the <i>Women of Malta Association's</i> application to be represented and the principle of equal rights for women in political life.
4th meeting March 16, 1945	Association's admission to the Assembly was formally approved.
10th meeting July 20, 1945	Paul Boffa moved a motion proposing: 'One person, one vote' for all men and women. This was approved after a long discussion.
18th meeting November 16, 1945	Women's right to stand for elections was approved.

THE CANDIDATES OF 1947



Hélène Buhagiar (Democratic Action Party)

The Party gained ground due to the vacuum left by the Constitutionals and because of the state of the Nationalist Party at that time. It included landowners and esteemed professionals who wanted to preserve their standing.



Agatha Barbara (Labour Party)

Agatha Barbara, a 24 year old teacher, with solid working-class roots from Zabbar. The first female parliamentarian (1947), first female cabinet minister (1950) and first woman President of the Republic (1982). In 1947 the party obtained 59.9% of the votes.

2 WOMEN CANDIDATES & 54.6% WOMEN VOTERS



There were 5 parties that contested: 3 did not present a female candidate.

There were 106,141 voters in 8 electoral districts.

75.42% of eligible voters went out to exercise their right.

54.5% of the voters were women.



AGIUS FERRANTE, ANNE



ATTARD BEZZINA, FANNY



BARBARA, AGATHA



BONACI, EVELYN



BUTTIGIEG, CLAUDETTE



CAMILLERI, MARIA



CARUANA, JUSTYNE



COLEIRO PRECA, MARIE LOUISE



COMODINI CACHIA, THERESE



CRISTINA, DOLORES



CUTAJAR, ROSIANNE



DALLI, HELENA



D'AMATO, HELEN



DARMENIA BRINCAT, CETTINA



DE TRAFFORD STRICKLAND, CECILIA



DEBONO, GIOVANNA



DEBONO, KRISTY



DEGUARA, MARIA



FARRUGIA PORTELLI, JULIA



LAW, RITA



MIFSUD BONNICI, PAULA



PORTELLI, MARTHESI



FARRUGIA, MARLENE



SANT, CARMEN



SCHEMBRI, DEBORAH



STRICKLAND, MABEL



MYRIAM SPITERI DEBONO
*Speaker of the House of Representatives
1996-1998*

In-Nisa fil-Parlament
Women in Parliament
1947 SAL-LUM
TO DATE

POLITICAL ECONOMIC INFLUENCES

28 women
Parliamentarians in
74 years

CULTURAL INFLUENCES: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH



- Archbishop Gonzi's vocabulary associated with the struggle for women's rights, was deeply coloured by traditional gender relations but also by a discourse of maternity and morality.
- The main battle against suffrage was led by the newspaper of the Catholic Action Movement, *Lehen is-Sewwa* and through the pulpit.

PROPOSED REFORMS:

- ❖ Promote **gender mainstreaming** and create a Strategy for Gender Equality and Diversity in Parliament;
- ❖ Support parties so they motivate, train and mentor women by means of **state funding** so that voters will be able to choose from gender-balanced lists;
- ❖ Ensure that women obtain **critical influence in the Electoral Commission** and that that an independent annual gender audit of parties takes place, before these may qualify for the proposed public funding.
- ❖ Constitutional changes to introduce a '**Gender Corrective Mechanism**' that will be implemented by 2022.

TWO STEPS AHEAD

Constitutional Change



CURRENT AFFAIRS

Historical law approved which will strengthen the presence of women in Parliament

Posted On April 14, 2021 - Updated 15 April, 2021 7:34am

The House of Representatives has approved by 63 in favour and two against the Third Reading of the Bill to amend the Constitution and the General Elections Act which required a majority of not less than 45 MPs.

The Bill, which is being considered a historical one by both sides of the House, introduces measures for the equal representation of men and women in Parliament.

Legislation Electoral Commission



AHBARIJIET COVID-19 SPORT TVMi RADJU SKEDA KUF


This article is also available in English



LOKALI

Jinhattru l-membri tal-Kummissjoni Elettorali – 4 mill-10 kummissjonarji huma nisa

Impresso' Settembru 10, 2021



The **Gender Corrective Mechanism** respects the *current electoral system* based on the Proportional Representational system through the Single Transferable Vote (PR-STV). It is a step that follows the 1987 majority corrective mechanism. It will ensure that the percentage of MPs making the ‘under-represented’ sex in the House of Representatives will be closest possible to 40%.

A STEP BY STEP APPROACH

1. **Voting at the General Elections takes place through the PR-STV** in the same manner adopted in past General Elections in order to elect 65 members of Parliament, five from each of the 13 electoral districts.
2. On conclusion of voting at the General Elections, the **Electoral Commission establishes if any party gains a relative majority of the valid first preference votes** in a two-party Parliament. Number 1 votes are counted.
3. The Electoral Commission proceeds to start the counting of the PR-STV preferences so **that 65 MPs are elected from the electoral districts.**

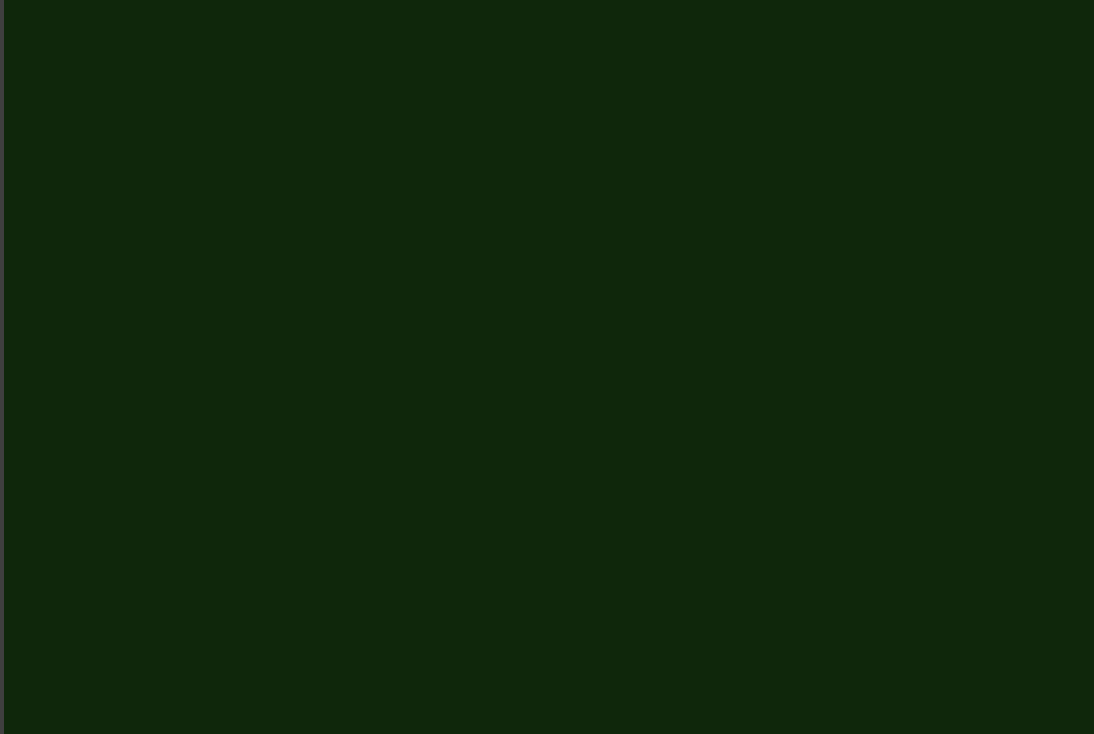
A STEP BY STEP APPROACH

4. Having completed all the counts of all the 13 districts, the Electoral Commission declares the 65 elected members.
5. Those candidates elected in two districts will need to drop one district. Casual elections take place.
6. It will be established which of the sexes is to be classified as “the under-represented sex” (being the sex which has less than 40% of the seats elected) after all the steps taken above from 1-7.
7. The Electoral Commission will then pass on to activate the ‘Gender Corrective Mechanism’ to elect such number of candidates from the under-represented sex up to a maximum of 12 new seats.



OTHER PROVISIONS IN THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

- **Gender neutral persons/non-binary individuals are to be counted with the under-represented sex** both at the initial stage where the percentage of the under-represented sex in Parliament is established and also at the stage of choosing candidates to occupy additional seats created by the proposed mechanism.



OTHER PROVISIONS IN
THE PROPOSED
CONSTITUTIONAL
AMENDMENTS

Sunset Clause

The reform includes an unconditional sunset clause, whereby the mechanism would expire after 20 years.



THIRD PARTY SCENARIO

The Majority Corrective Mechanism that has been applied in Malta within the framework of the PR-STV since the 1980s, reflects a two-party scenario.

In a future scenario where a third party may elect candidates and fill seats in Parliament on its own steam, the Majority Corrective Mechanism will not be activated.

If a new electoral system is adopted the GCM will need to be integrated in the new electoral law.

WE ARE SHAKING THE TREE

Sarah Childs aptly underlined that mere numeric (or **descriptive**) representation may not do much to improve the lives of women unless it also positively impacts **substantive** policy. “The assumption that women representatives are more likely to act for women than male representatives may seem reasonable.

This assumption is often understood in terms of the concept of **critical mass**; i.e. when there is a critical mass of women present ... politics will reflect to a much greater extent women’s concerns”. Yet, she argued that the concept is questioned in contexts where a higher percentage of women in political institutions did not translate into a better appreciation of women’s needs and aspirations and whenever women in politics failed to act for women. This underscores the importance of a **gender mainstreaming** process that goes hand-in-hand with legal amendments.

