

**PRESS RELEASE**

**City Gate and Old Opera House Project**

The Valletta Alive Foundation welcomes government's decision to embark on the City Gate and the old opera house project. VAF agrees that the opera house site is to house the new Parliament. Moreover, the various activities organised throughout the year in Freedom square indicate a strong demand for popular cultural and educational activities in this strategic location of Valletta. Hence, part of the volume of the opera house site especially at street level should be used as multi-purpose cultural space.

VAF also agrees that the Grandmaster's palace should be for tourism and culture related uses, such as museums.

VAF asks government to consider including a multistorey car park under a pedestrianised Freedom square. Valletta's economic, social and cultural role could be undermined unless good access is maintained, including parking provision. Provision of underground parking would also allow for reduction of parking and traffic within Valletta streets.

The Foundation appeals to civil society to debate the projects in a constructive manner. Under no circumstance should decisions and actions be unduly delayed with endless debating of what should or should not be done. Whatever decision is taken, there will always be those who will disagree with it. In a democracy, the elected representatives should listen and take note of the opinions expressed but then a final decision has to be taken in the least possible time in the best interest of the Maltese society. This project needs to go ahead urgently after being shelved for so much time.

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