

Archives

Dancing with crime



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Crimes are crimes and every single incident acquires a victim. The Maltese crime scenario is a dynamic one: a scenario where the perpetrator and the victim dance to an ultimately one-sided tempo. One is hurt, the other a bit better off, but in some case the discrepancy between both can be staggering as the type of crime moves towards financial imperatives.

As these islands become more and more populated, more economically diverse, adept at reducing less serious crime, in turn dangerousness proportionately grows, rendering the islands relatively more amenable to serious crimes.

And this is already happening: the last few years experienced a phenomenon of a trend-line decrease year on year. As crimes decrease due to various reasons such as improved Community Policing, awareness, crime prevention, a better-informed public and heightened enforcement, those that remain verge on the more dangerous offences such as drugs, threats, domestic violence and generic violence. In turn, new categories have been brought to the fore such as financial crime. These include:

- Cases related to the financing of terrorism;
- Money Laundering – recorded for the first time as a distinct category in 2017, registered a 192% increase in 2020, reaching 105 cases, up from 36 cases in 2019 and 33 cases in 2018.

As detailed in the annual CrimeMalta Report (www.crimemalta.com):

- The Maltese offence profile has changed from a public-oriented to a personal-target dimension with an increasing focus on financial-related offences and domestic violence;
- Police enhancement resulted in a mitigation shift in awareness, personal safety

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- The implementation of the 2019 Community Policing established another first;
- The implementation of the 2020 Malta Police Transformation Strategy 2020-2025; and
- The implementation of the 2019 Community Policing set the scene for a radical overhaul of the service.

2021, having banked on the disappearance of tourist-related offenses (both tourists as victims and tourists as perpetrators), where crime fell by 16%, might again experience a potential increase year-on-year as tourists numbers seeks to regain their strength. However, it is hoped that the 2020 COVID-anomaly will serve as a gauge on the understanding of the local-related and the tourist-related crime scenarios, and engage the police and security entities to diversify their logistics and mitigation.

2021 will see more financial and professional-related offences being reported and brought to the courts, more cyber-related offences as detailed by SF (CrimeMalta annual presentation: Formosa stated that “Crime is evolving from a Social-Space structure to the invasion of Personal-Space and into Virtual-Space” and will also render a perception that crimes are becoming more audacious and dangerous). The latter is a perception emboldened by the fact that less serious crimes are decreasing; thus the percentage weight of the serious ones increases relatively.

2021 is a year to watch out for: with FATF’s emphases on tax evasion, money laundering cases, as well as the rise of the cyber domain and waves of sophisticated attacks on companies as well as mobile and SMS scams made more frustrating as victims become party to such scams through inputting of personal information. All this is apart from fraud and forgeries and the psychological weight of COVID on personal relationships, and the increase in physical and psychological abuse, at times leading to death.

Crime is shifting to virtual domains with very real victims.

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Dr. Mark Said 2 years ago

A very eye-opening article based on facts and reliable projections. Truly worrisome at the same time, though.

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