

**Speech by HE George Vella, President of Malta, at the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation  
Pedestal Convoy to Malta, 13 August 2019**

- Many agree that in the 1940's, ravished and destroyed by heavy artillery, wide spread famine and a population on the brink of exhaustion, Malta was facing its biggest test of endurance and resilience. Operation Pedestal, or as it is locally known *il-Konvoj ta' Santa Maria*, is probably one of the most decisive episodes in Malta's recent historical past. In fact, the arrival on 13, 14 and 15 August 1942 of the much-awaited Convoy, consisting of the surviving merchant ships Port Chalmers, Rochester Castle, Melbourne Star, Brisbane Star and finally the fuel tanker SS Ohio, was met with great jubilation and mass celebrations
- The majority of us are too young and leading comfortable lives to truly understand the adversity of living under siege. Yet, our parents and grandparents endured this harsh reality with a strong psychological and moral conviction to hold a united front to survive and defeat the violent Axis
- Not only was the convoy instrumental to provide the population with much needed food and fuel supplies but it was also key to reinstate hope in the hearts of the population and strengthen the Maltese resolve against a most belligerent and violent enemy. It is a historical fact that in WW2, due to its strategic position, Malta was one of the most heavily bombarded countries, with one particular month (April 1942) registering over 7,000 tons of bombs dropped on key British naval and air-forces, but also indiscriminately hitting towns and villages, killing men, women and children
- On this special day, I am proud that we have gathered here to remember and salute the fallen victims of Operation Pedestal and others who so bravely gave their lives to protect peace and stability in Europe and the Mediterranean. We are also here to celebrate the bravery and determination of the Maltese population living in the post-war period, who through renewed sacrifices rebuilt the country into a modern and peaceful nation, the State we all enjoy today
- As we lay our flowers and say our prayers, let us not forget that there are still thousands of people enduring bombardments, hardships, deprivation and blockades due to military interventions around the world and in countries in our region.

- We should therefore stop and think about our shared history, and about the repeated transgressions of human rights, and violations of peace, security and sovereignty. What sense does it make to commemorate the sacrifice borne by our forefathers, without acknowledging and condemning present injustices, if not out-right war crimes? How will future generations judge our actions if we persistently continue to turn a blind eye to present atrocities, while dutifully commemorating the sacrifices done by our forefathers 77 years ago?
- I believe it is important that we now look outwards and promote with the younger generations a greater sense of responsibility to restore justice and establish peace and stability for all
- We share our past, present and future. Most importantly, we must share our strong commitment towards dialogue, unity and peace. Together we stop and reverse present ill-practices and injustices and establish a more peaceful existence for present and future generations in stability, security and prosperity.

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