

CHAPTER 251

ĠIEH IR-REPUBBLIKA ACT

To provide for the institution of a society of honour to be known as Ġieh ir-Repubblika, to make provision for the award of medals for courage and service to the Republic, for the abolition of titles of nobility and the control of honours and decorations, and to provide for matters ancillary or incidental to those purposes.

(17th October, 1975)*

ACT XXIX of 1975, as amended by Acts XXXVII of 1976, [XIII of 1983](#), [XIV of 1990](#), [XI of 1991](#) and [XV of 1993](#); [Legal Notice 423 of 2007](#); and Acts [VI of 2008](#), [V](#) and [XVII](#) of 2011, [XIX of 2013](#) and [XXXVII of 2015](#).

ARRANGEMENT OF ACT

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*See article 1(2) as originally enacted, which subarticle is being omitted under the Statute Law Revision Act, 1980, and Legal Notice 125 of 1975.

Short title.

1. The short title of this Act is the *Ġieh ir-Repubblika Act*.

PART I

ĠIEH IR-REPUBBLIKA

Institution and motto.

2. (1) There shall be, and is hereby instituted a society of honour to be known as *Ġieh ir-Repubblika*, hereinafter referred to as *Ix-Xirka* or *Xirka*.

- (2) The motto of the *Xirka* shall be "*Għall-ġid tal-Maltin*".

Members of the *Xirka*.
Amended by:
XIV. 1990.2.

3. (1) The *Xirka* shall consist of the members and honorary members whom the President of Malta on the written advice of the Prime Minister, shall from time to time appoint, in accordance with and subject to the provisions of this Act.

- (2) Only Maltese citizens shall be eligible to be appointed as members of the *Xirka* and only persons who are not then Maltese citizens shall be eligible to be appointed as honorary members of the *Xirka*.

- (3) Appointments as member or honorary member of the *Xirka* shall be made for exceptional merit in the service of Malta or of humanity.

- (4) Notwithstanding the provisions of subarticle (3), any distinguished citizen of a country other than Malta whom it is desired to honour may be appointed as an honorary member of the *Xirka*.

Number of members.
Amended by:
XIX. 2013.2.

4. (1) The President of Malta may appoint as members of the *Xirka* not more than three persons every two years.

- (2) Appointments shall have effect on Republic Day.

- (3) The foregoing provisions of this article shall not apply to appointments of honorary members.

Designation and insignia.
Amended by:
XIV. 1990.3.

5. (1) A member or honorary member of the *Xirka* shall be entitled to -

- (a) have the letters S.G. (*Sieġeb il-Ġieh*) placed after his name on all occasions when the use of such letters is customary;
- (b) wear as a decoration the insignia of the *Xirka* prescribed in the rules made under this Act.

- (2) The Head of the *Xirka* shall be entitled to wear as a decoration the insignia of the *Xirka* prescribed in the rules made under this Act.
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PART II

*Added by:
XIV. 1990.5.*

THE NATIONAL ORDER OF MERIT

6. (1) There shall be, and is hereby instituted, a national order of merit to be known as The National Order of Merit, hereinafter referred to as the Order.

*Institution and
motto of Order.
Added by :
XIV. 1990.5.*

(2) The motto of the Order shall be "*virtute et constantia*".

7. (1) The Order shall consist of members whom the President, on the written advice of the Prime Minister, shall from time to time appoint, in accordance with and subject to the provisions of this Act.

*Members of the
Order.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.5.*

(2) Only Maltese citizens shall be eligible to be appointed as members of the Order.

(3) Honorary membership of the Order may be conferred on foreign nationals who have distinguished themselves by their service in the promotion and fostering of international relations or who have earned the respect and gratitude of the people of the Maltese Islands.

(4) References to membership or honorary membership shall include all the grades of membership listed in article 8.

8. (1) The Order shall consist of four grades of membership: Companions of Honour, Companions, Officers and ordinary members.

*Grades of the
Order.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.5.
Amended by:
VI. 2008.2;
XIX. 2013.3.*

(2) The number of members in each grade of the Order shall be as follows:

(a) not more than three persons at any one time shall be Companions of Honour of the Order:

Provided that, in determining the number of members in this grade, no account shall be taken of such members who hold or have held the Office of President of Malta or of Prime Minister;

(b) not more than two persons shall be appointed Companions of the Order in each year;

(c) not more than three persons shall be appointed Officers of the Order in each year;

(d) not more than ten persons shall be appointed ordinary members of the Order in each year.

(3) Appointments shall have effect on Republic Day.

(4) The provisions of sub-articles (2) and (3) shall not apply to appointments of honorary members.

(5) The President of Malta and the Prime Minister shall by virtue of their offices be Companions of Honour of the Order. All former Presidents of Malta and all former Prime Ministers shall be Companions of Honour of the Order.

(6) The President of Malta may award the honour of Companion of Honour of the Order even posthumously to a person who shall have

served as Acting President of Malta for a period of not less than one year when the office of the President of Malta was vacant.

Designations and
Insignia of the
Order.

Added by:
XIV. 1990.5.

9. (1) A member or honorary member of the Order shall be entitled to wear such insignia of the Order as prescribed for his or her grade in the rules made under this Act.

(2) Members of the Order shall be entitled to place the following letters after their names on all occasions where the use of such letters is customary -

- (a) Companion of Honour: K.U.O.M.;
- (b) Companion: K.O.M.;
- (c) Officer: U.O.M.;
- (d) Member: M.O.M.

Amended by:
XIV. 1990.4.

PART III

MEDALS OF THE REPUBLIC

*Midalja għall-
Qlubija.*

Amended by:
XIV. 1990.4, 6;
XVII. 2011.2.

10. (1) A medal to be known as *Midalja għall-Qlubija* may be awarded by the President of Malta, on the written advice of the Prime Minister, to any Maltese citizen for an act of exceptional bravery.

(2) The *Midalja għall-Qlubija* may also be awarded posthumously.

(3) Notwithstanding the provisions of subarticle (1), the *Midalja għall-Qlubija* may be awarded on an honorary basis to any citizen of a country other than Malta for an act of exceptional bravery that merits recognition by Malta.

*Midalja għall-
Qadi tar-
Repubblika.*

Amended by:
XXXVII. 1976.2;
XIV. 1990.4, 6.

11. (1) A medal to be known as *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* may be awarded by the President of Malta, on the written advice of the Prime Minister, to any Maltese citizen for distinguished service to Malta.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subarticle (1), the *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* may be awarded on an honorary basis to any distinguished citizen of a country other than Malta whom it is desired to honour.

(3) The *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* may also be awarded posthumously.

Number of medals.

Amended by:
XIV. 1990.7;
VI. 2008.3;
XIX. 2013.4.

12. (1) The President of Malta may award the "*Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika*" to not more than ten Maltese citizens in any year.

(2) For the purposes of sub-article (1), no account shall be taken of any award made on an honorary basis.

13. A person to whom a *Midalja għall-Ġlubija* has been awarded shall be entitled -

Designation and wearing of the *Midalja għall-Ġlubija*.

- (a) to have the letters M.R.Q. (*Midalja tar-Repubblika għall-Ġlubija*) placed after his name on all occasions when the use of such letters is customary; and
- (b) to wear the medal as a decoration in accordance with the rules made under this Act.

14. A person to whom a *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* has been awarded shall be entitled -

Designation and wearing of the *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika*.

- (a) to have the letters M.Q.R. (*Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika*) placed after his name on all occasions when the use of such letters is customary; and
- (b) to wear the medal as a decoration in accordance with the rules made under this Act.

14A. (1) Without prejudice to the provisions of article 14, the President may, in special circumstances, award the *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* to a group of persons or a voluntary organisation which is duly enrolled with the Commissioner in terms of the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#).

Conditions relating to awards.
Added by:
VI. 2008.4.

Cap. 492.

(2) Where the *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* is awarded to a group or to an organisation, the Committee shall, in terms of article 18(2), indicate the person belonging to the group or organisation who shall be entitled to have the letters M.Q.R. (*Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika*) placed after his name on all occasions when the use of such letters is customary and to wear the medal as a decoration in accordance with the rules made under this Act.

(3) In the eventuality that the person, indicated in subarticle (2) no longer forms part of the organisation, or the group, the President of Malta may, on the advice of the Prime Minister and following a recommendation to that effect by the Nominations Committee, nominate another person that appertains to such organisation or group who shall be entitled to have the M.Q.R. (*Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika*) placed after his name on all occasions when the use of such letters is customary and to wear the medal as a decoration in accordance with the rules made under this Act and in such eventuality the person that no longer forms part of the organisation or the group will no longer have the right to have the letters M.Q.R. (*Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika*) placed after his name on any occasions when the use of such letters is customary and to wear the medal as a decoration in accordance with the rules made under this Act. In such an eventuality the individual is to return the medal to the Secretary to the Cabinet.

(4) In the eventuality that the organisation, or the group mentioned in subarticle (2) disbands, the President of Malta, on the advice of the Prime Minister and following a recommendation to that effect by the Nominations Committee, may withdraw the *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika*. In such eventuality, the individual shall return the medal to the Secretary to the Cabinet.

(5) Where the *Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* is revoked in terms of subarticle (4), the provisions of article 23(2) shall apply.

National
Commemorative
Medals.

Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.
Amended by:
XI. 1991.2;
XIX. 2013.5.

15. (1) The President, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, may cause the striking of medals to mark an event, or the anniversary of an event, of national importance.

(2) National Commemorative Medals shall be awarded by the President, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, to persons who are worthy of the honour.

(3) No more than four national events shall be commemorated by the striking of medals in any period of ten years, and such medals shall only be struck to mark the national event itself, and its anniversaries of importance.

Long and Efficient
Service Medals.

Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.
Amended by:
VI. 2008.5;
XIX. 2013.6;
XXXVII. 2015.2.

16. (1) A Medal, to be known as the Distinguished Service Medal, and a Medal to be known as the Long and Efficient Service Medal, hereinafter in this article called the medals, shall be awarded to qualifying members of disciplined forces by the Ministers responsible therefor. After the award of the medal, clasps may be given for additional qualifying service.

(2) Qualifying service for the medal and for clasps shall be that laid down in the rules made under this Act.

(3) All members and former members of disciplined forces who have served, on an aggregate basis, for the period stipulated in the rules made under this Act, and have rendered efficient service throughout, shall be eligible to be awarded the medal and clasp.

(4) For the purpose of this article disciplined forces mean -

- (a) the Armed Forces of Malta;
- (b) the Malta Police Force;
- (c) the Malta Correctional Services; and
- (d) the Assistance and Rescue Force within the Civil Protection Department.

(5) In exceptional circumstances the Distinguished Service Medal may be awarded to members of foreign military or police forces.

Wearing of medals.

Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.
Amended by:
VI. 2008.6.

17. A person to whom a National Commemorative Medal, Distinguished Service Medal, or a Long and Efficient Service Medal has been awarded, shall be entitled to wear the medal in accordance with the rules made under this Act.

PART IV

PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO PARTS I, II AND III

Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.

18. (1) There shall be a Nominations Committee, hereinafter referred to as the Committee, appointed by the Prime Minister, for such term and under such conditions as the Prime Minister may determine, to propose candidates for membership of the *Xirka*, the Order and for the award of medals; the Secretary to the Cabinet shall be the Chairman of this Committee. One member of this Committee shall be appointed after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

Nominations for membership of the *Xirka* and the Order, and for the award of medals.

Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.
Amended by:
VI. 2008.7.

(2) In proposing candidates to the Prime Minister, the Committee shall ensure that a nomination meets the criteria for admission to the membership of the *Xirka* or the Order, or for the award of a medal as the case may be, and, for this purpose, the Committee shall have power to regulate its own procedure.

19. (1) The President of Malta shall be the Head of the *Xirka* and of the Order.

Officials.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.

(2) The Secretary to the Cabinet shall be the Chancellor of the *Xirka* and of the Order.

(3) The President of Malta may, on the advice of the Prime Minister, appoint such other officials of the *Xirka* and of the Order as may be considered necessary.

(4) A person shall not be considered a member of the *Xirka* or of the Order by reason only of his being an official of the *Xirka* or of the Order.

20. Appointments as member or honorary member of the *Xirka* or of the Order shall be made by an official instrument signed by the Head of the *Xirka* or the Order, under the authority of the Prime Minister, and sealed with the Seal of the *Xirka* or of the Order, as the case may be.

Instrument of appointment.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.

21. The Chancellor of the *Xirka* and of the Order shall keep registers showing the names of the members and honorary members of the *Xirka* and of the Order, and such other records relating to membership of the Order as may be prescribed in rules made under this Act, and shall perform such other functions in respect thereof as the Head of the *Xirka* or of the Order may require him to perform or as may be prescribed by the Act or any rules made thereunder.

Chancellor of the *Xirka* and of the Order.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.

22. The appointment and promotion of members and honorary members of the *Xirka* and of the Order and the award of medals under the provisions of this Act shall be notified in the Gazette.

Gazetting of appointments and awards.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.

23. (1) A person shall cease to be a member of the *Xirka* or of the Order, or to be the holder of a medal awarded under this Act upon:

Termination of membership of *Xirka*, etc.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.
Amended by:
XVII. 2011.3.

(a) his or her death;

(b) his or her resignation from the *Xirka* or the Order, except in the case of those persons who are members

in virtue of an office they hold or have held, or by the return of the medal. The cessation shall take effect from the date on which the resignation from the *Xirka* or the Order is received by the Chancellor of the *Xirka* or the Order, or the medal is returned to the Secretary to the Cabinet;

- (c) if such person has been guilty of such conduct as makes him unworthy of continuing to be a member of the Order or of the *Xirka* or the holder of a medal, and the appointment is terminated or the award of the medal is revoked by the President of Malta acting on a resolution of the House of Representatives in accordance with such procedures as may be prescribed by rules made under this Act.

(2) A person shall cease to be an honorary member of the *Xirka* or of the Order, or to be the holder on an honorary basis of a medal awarded under this Act upon:

- (a) his or her death;
- (b) his or her notifying the Government of Malta that he or she no longer wishes to continue to be an honorary member of the *Xirka* or the Order, or by the return of the medal. The cessation shall take effect from the date on which the notification is received by the Chancellor of the *Xirka* or the Order, or the medal is returned to the Secretary to the Cabinet;
- (c) if the President of Malta, on the advice of the Prime Minister given after he has consulted the Leader of the Opposition, terminates the honorary appointment to the *Xirka* or to the Order or withdraws the award of a medal on the grounds that the conduct of the person has, according to the opinion given in the said advice, made him unworthy of continuing to be a member of the *Xirka* or the Order or the holder of a medal or that it is no longer proper to keep the honorary appointment to the *Xirka* or to the Order or the award of the medal in force.

(3) Termination of membership in terms of subarticle (1)(b) and (c) or of subarticle (2)(b) and (c) shall be notified in the Gazette.

Return of insignia,
etc.
Added by:
XIV: 1990.8.

24. (1) Where a person ceases, other than by death, to be a member of the *Xirka* or the Order, or to be the holder of a medal, he shall forthwith return to the Chancellor of the *Xirka* or the Order the insignia of the *Xirka* or the Order that was awarded to him or her; the medal shall be returned to the Secretary to the Cabinet.

(2) Upon promotion to a higher grade, a member of the Order shall return to the Registrar the insignia of the grade to which he belonged before promotion.

(3) The holder of a medal shall not be required to return the medal on his admission to membership of the *Xirka* or the Order.

25. (1) No appointment to the *Xirka* or to the Order and no termination of any such appointment shall be valid unless sealed with the Seal of the *Xirka* or the Order as the case may be.

Seal of the *Xirka*
and of the Order.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.

(2) The Seals of the *Xirka* and of the Order shall be kept in the custody of the President of Malta.

26. The President of Malta may from time to time, on the advice of the Prime Minister, make rules -

Power to make
rules.
Added by:
XIV. 1990.8.
Amended by:
XV.1993.78.

- (a) prescribing anything which under the foregoing provisions of this Act may be or is required to be prescribed;
- (b) respecting the design, form and content of the insignia and medals and the protocol of wearing such insignia and medals;
- (c) respecting the formalities of investiture and award;
- (d) making any other ancillary provision which may be required or deemed expedient in order to give better effect to any of the provisions of this Act;
- (e) prescribing the insignia of office that may be worn by officers of a local government authority, members of any Organ of the State, or by officers of the Government of Malta whether in local or foreign service or whether belonging to a disciplined force or otherwise.

27. Any person who makes use of the insignia of the *Xirka* or of the Order or of a medal established in or under this Act, without being entitled thereto in accordance with the foregoing provisions of this Act, or who places or causes to be placed after his name any letters indicating or purporting to indicate membership of the *Xirka* or of the Order or the holding of a medal under this Act, without being entitled thereto in accordance with the foregoing provisions of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine (*multa*) of not less than two hundred and thirty-two euro and ninety-four cents (232.94) and not exceeding one thousand and one hundred and sixty-four euro and sixty-nine cents (1,164.69).

Unauthorised use
of insignia of the
Xirka, Order, etc.
Added by:
XIV.1990.8.
Amended by:
L.N. 423 of 2007.

PART V

TITLES OF NOBILITY AND FOREIGN HONOURS AND DECORATIONS

Amended by:
XIV. 1990.4.

28. (1) Titles of nobility are not recognised and any privilege or other right ancillary to any such title shall cease to have effect.

Titles of nobility
not recognised.

(2) Nothing in subarticle (1) shall prejudicially affect any proprietary right which may be competent to or may devolve on any person as the person who, but for the provisions of that subarticle, would have been the holder of a title of nobility.

(3) Any condition in the deed or instrument of foundation, or in any other document, requiring the use of a title of nobility or of any name or other description for the enjoyment of any proprietary right shall be without any effect whatsoever.

Recognised
honours,
decorations, etc.
Amended by:
XIV. 1990.9;
V. 2011.22.

29. (1) No honour, award or decoration, other than a university degree *honoris causa*, a prize, or an award for bravery, and no membership of, or office in, any order, shall be recognized unless it is conferred under this Act or any other law for the time being in force or it has been or is conferred by a foreign State or a Sovereign Order having diplomatic relations with Malta or any international organisation of which Malta is a member and, in respect of any honour, award, decoration, membership or office conferred to any person in Malta or to any citizen of Malta by any such State, Sovereign Order or any international organisation after the commencement of this Act, unless it is conferred with the written authority of the President of Malta given on the written advice of the Prime Minister.

(2) A request for an authorization under subarticle (1) shall be made in accordance with such procedure as may be prescribed by the rules made under this Act.

(3) Every authorization given under this article shall be notified in the Gazette.

(4) It shall be the duty of every public officer or authority, and of every body established or recognised by law and of every member thereof, to refrain from recognising in any way, and from doing anything which could imply recognition of, any title of nobility or any honour, award, decoration, membership or office which is not recognised in accordance with the foregoing provisions of this article.
