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MODULE 4
Media Literacy

Examples on lateral reading

lunaria

AFRICAN MEDIA ASSOCIATION MALTA

Associazione CARTA di ROMA

FUNDACIÓN MALDITA.ES

ANTIGONE
INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence

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WHAT IS LATERAL READING?

An alternative way of thinking about how I consume information

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WHAT IS LATERAL READING?

Lateral reading helps us verify whether the content we see is credible and comes from a reliable source.

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LATERAL READING

based on “THE SIFT APPROACH”, inserted by Caulfield in 2019

After having read the text vertically, you can:

Investigate the source

Find better coverage

Trace claims, quotes, and media back to the original text

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Example of lateral reading.

On February 2026, a Eurobarometer survey on citizens' perceptions of the future and expectations of the European Union **was analysed and reported by several outlets using different angles.**

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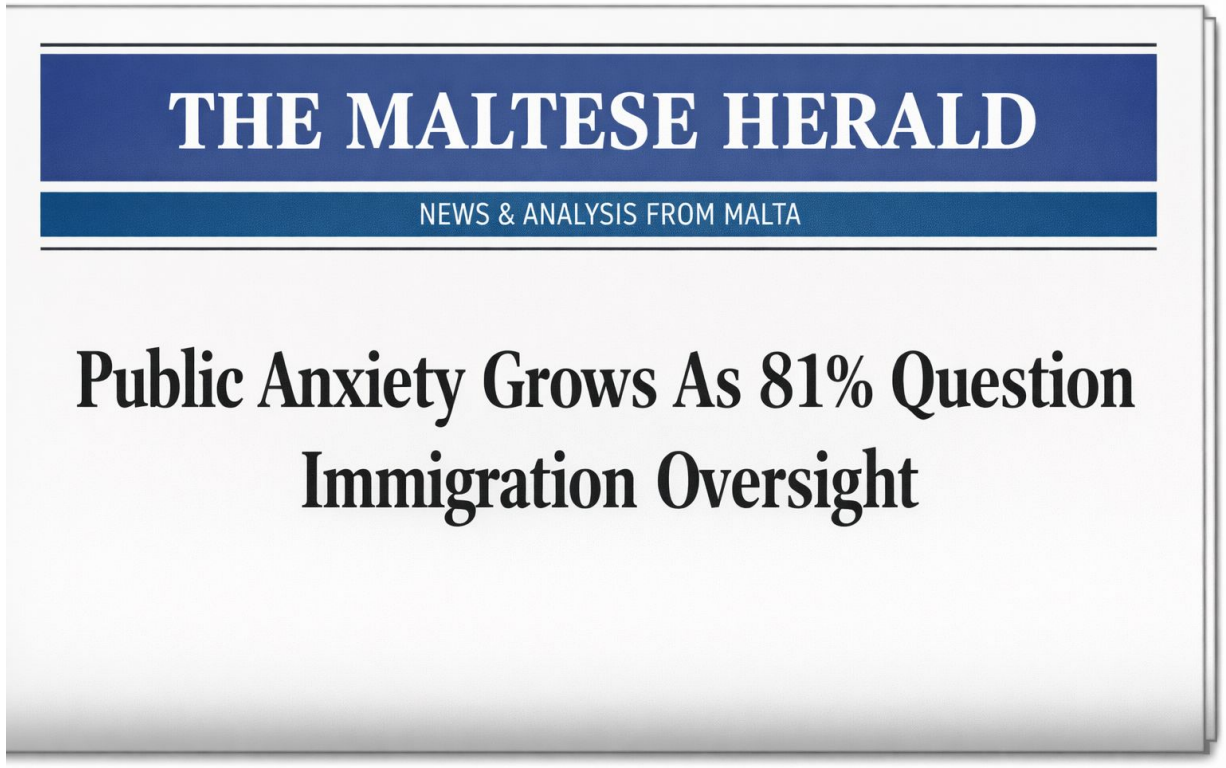
Some news outlets took an alarmist angle and put the focus on data related to migration.



Both newspaper's name and article's title modified and paraphrased

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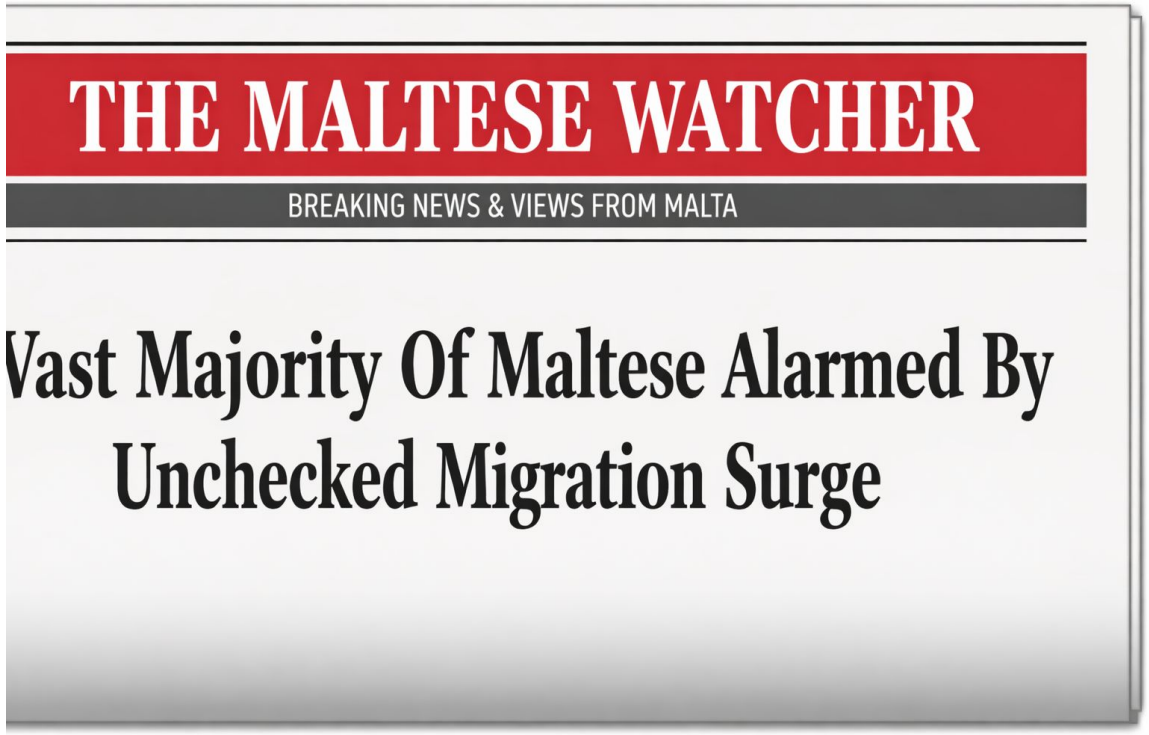
1. Investigate the source



AI-generated image. Used exclusively as a visual aid for simulating disinformation scenarios

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Is the newspaper a credible source of information?

The website doesn't have an “about us”. The team listed has different roles in the editorial board, but none is a journalist. It cannot be considered a credible source of information.

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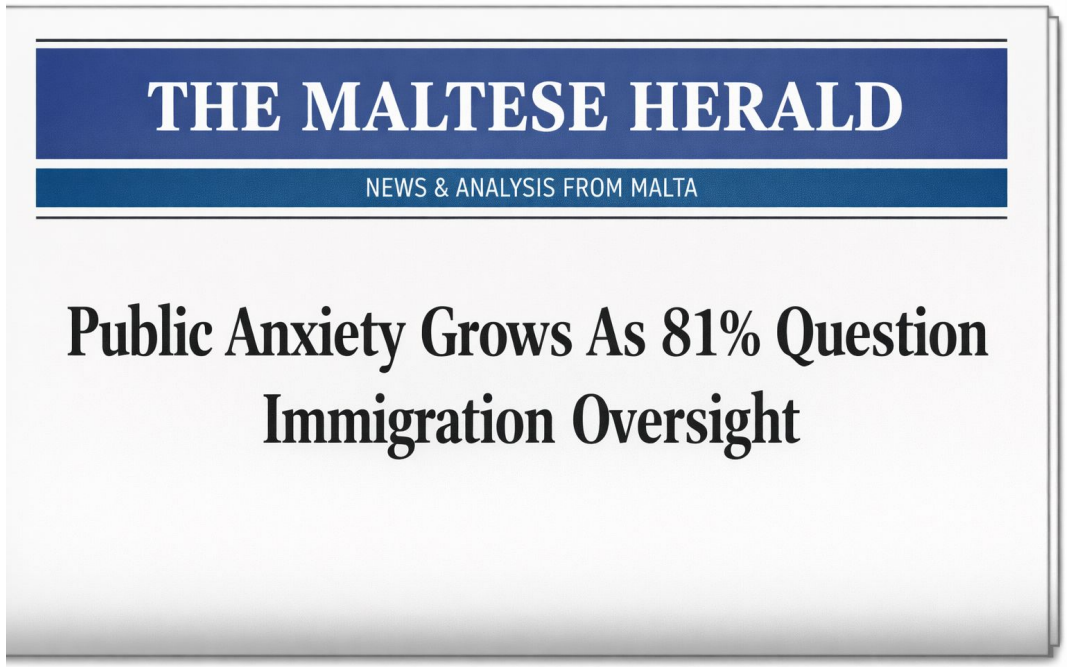

AI-generated image. Used exclusively as a visual aid for simulating disinformation scenarios.

- **Who is the author?**

There is no reference to an author, rather a link to a non journalistic platform

- **Which is its background ideology?**

A right wing political alignment

- **Is the newspaper, site, blog etc. linked with any particular social group's interests?**

Their sources are mainly from government, no in depth analysis is offered to the readers.

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2. Find better coverage

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What do other sources say about the Eurobarometer Survey?

(If you have any reliable sources or authors you can check what they say about the same topic)

If you open new tabs about the same topic, you can see that there are milder titles about the same news.

Most News outlets highlight the data about AI and fake news, only mentioning immigration in the text of the article.

1- Eurobarometer study finds that Maltese are worried about Fake AI content, disinformation

2- According to the latest Eurobarometer Survey, Maltese more alarmed than EU average about fake AI content and disinformation

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Most serious outlets report the survey as below:

"**Fake AI content, disinformation worrying Maltese, Eurobarometer study finds**"

Times of Malta (4th Feb 2026)

or

TMID Editorial: "**Awareness, disinformation and informed decisions**"

(The Malta Independent 7th Feb 2026)

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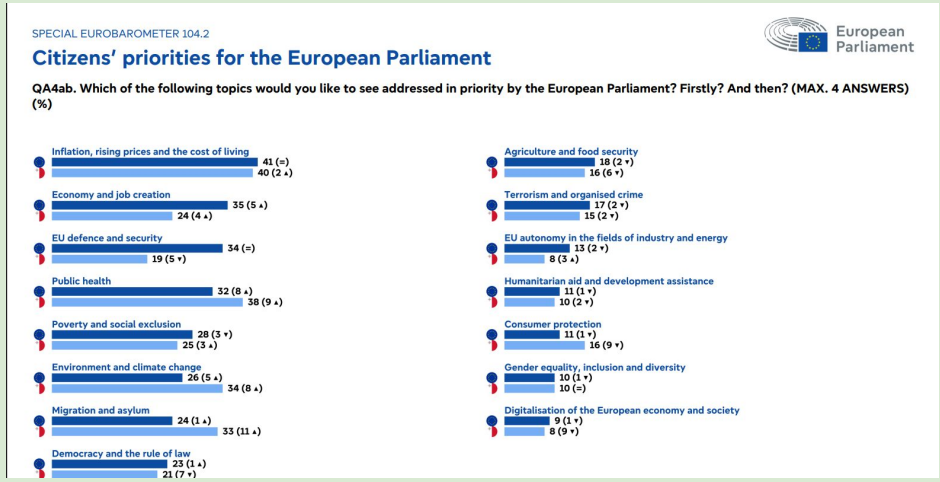
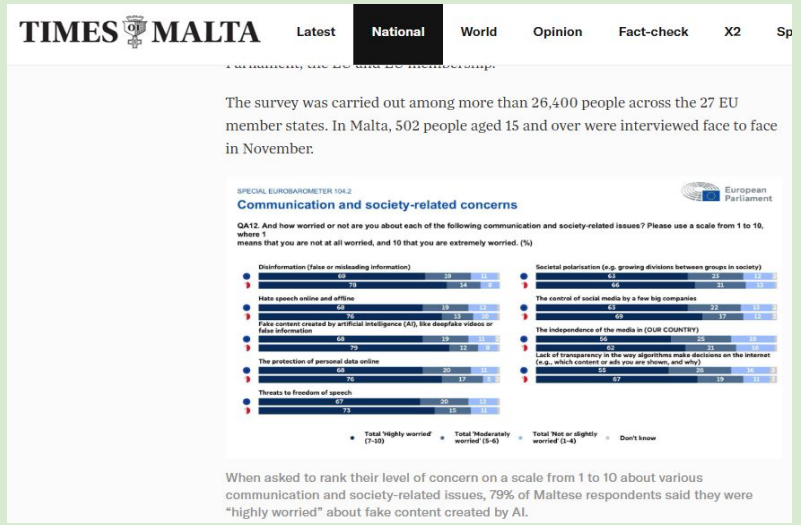
When checking, one can see that there also various sources that report the news, but from angles that restore the whole picture of what the Survey is about.

The Survey has 05 sections that include many aspects that do not justify the alarmist headline about immigration.

Times of Malta has gone as far as showing charts available on the survey to back up the information in the article



Screenshot of the survey about Malta on Point 4 related to "Citizens' priorities"



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3. Trace claims, quotes and media back to the original text

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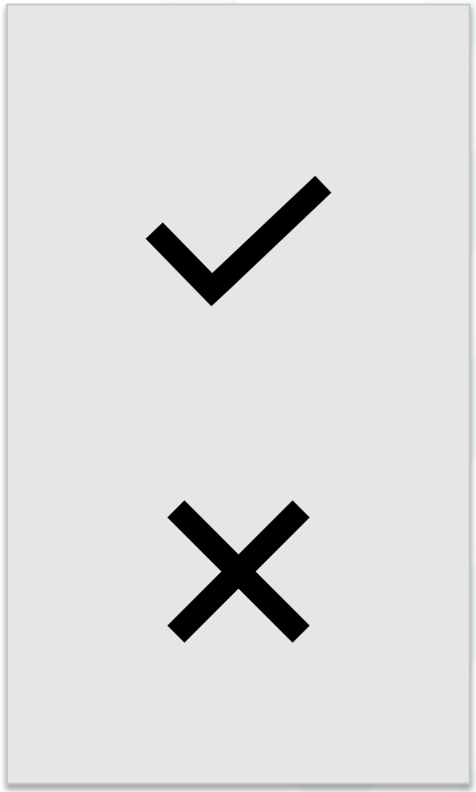
Considering the article or the newspaper:

- **Is there any reference to any official documents, any statements of official actors etc.?**
  NO

- **Is there any reference to scientific expertise, relevant reports etc.?**
  NO

- **Are there any pictures, videos that could be misleading?**
  Not in this example, but always pay attention.

- **Is there a whole text or just some quotes?**
  In this example there is a whole text, but in other examples there may be just quotes.



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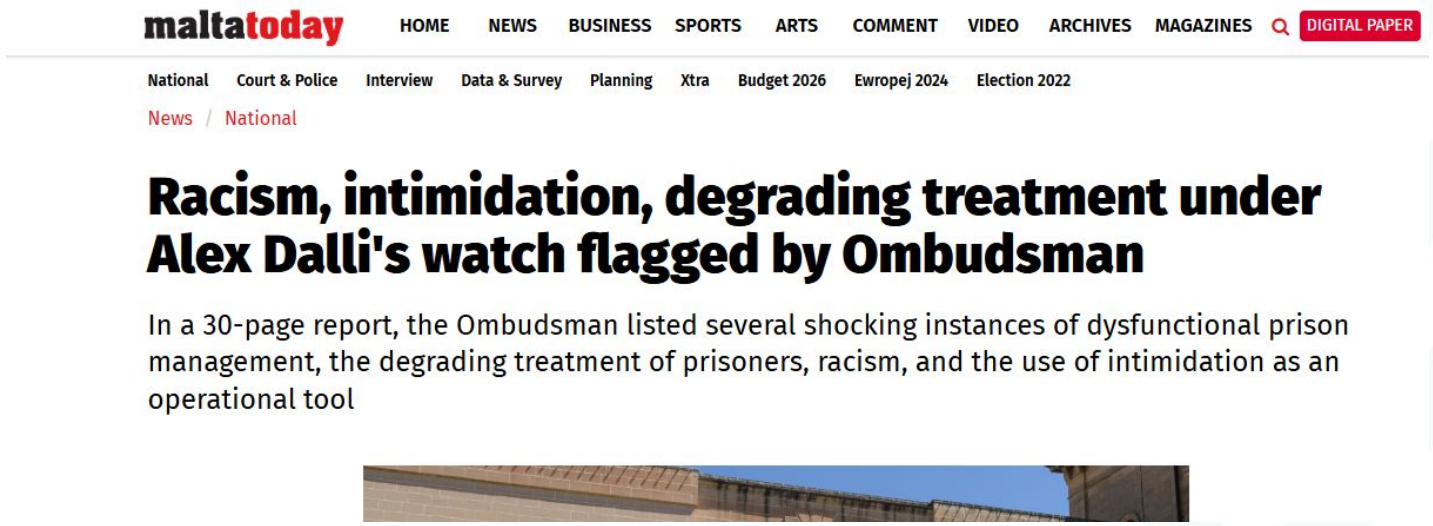
X

To summarise:

Although the information shared by *The Maltese Herald* (a fictitious outlet) is based on real data, it should not be taken at face value. The high level of public engagement it generated, including numerous derogatory comments about migrants illustrates how emotionally framed reporting can contribute to public manipulation.

A report concerning allegations of racism at the Corradino Correctional Facility (Malta's prison) was published by *MaltaToday* in January 2025.



maltatoday HOME NEWS BUSINESS SPORTS ARTS COMMENT VIDEO ARCHIVES MAGAZINES DIGITAL PAPER

National Court & Police Interview Data & Survey Planning Xtra Budget 2026 Ewropej 2024 Election 2022

News / National

Racism, intimidation, degrading treatment under Alex Dalli's watch flagged by Ombudsman

In a 30-page report, the Ombudsman listed several shocking instances of dysfunctional prison management, the degrading treatment of prisoners, racism, and the use of intimidation as an operational tool

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1. Investigate the source

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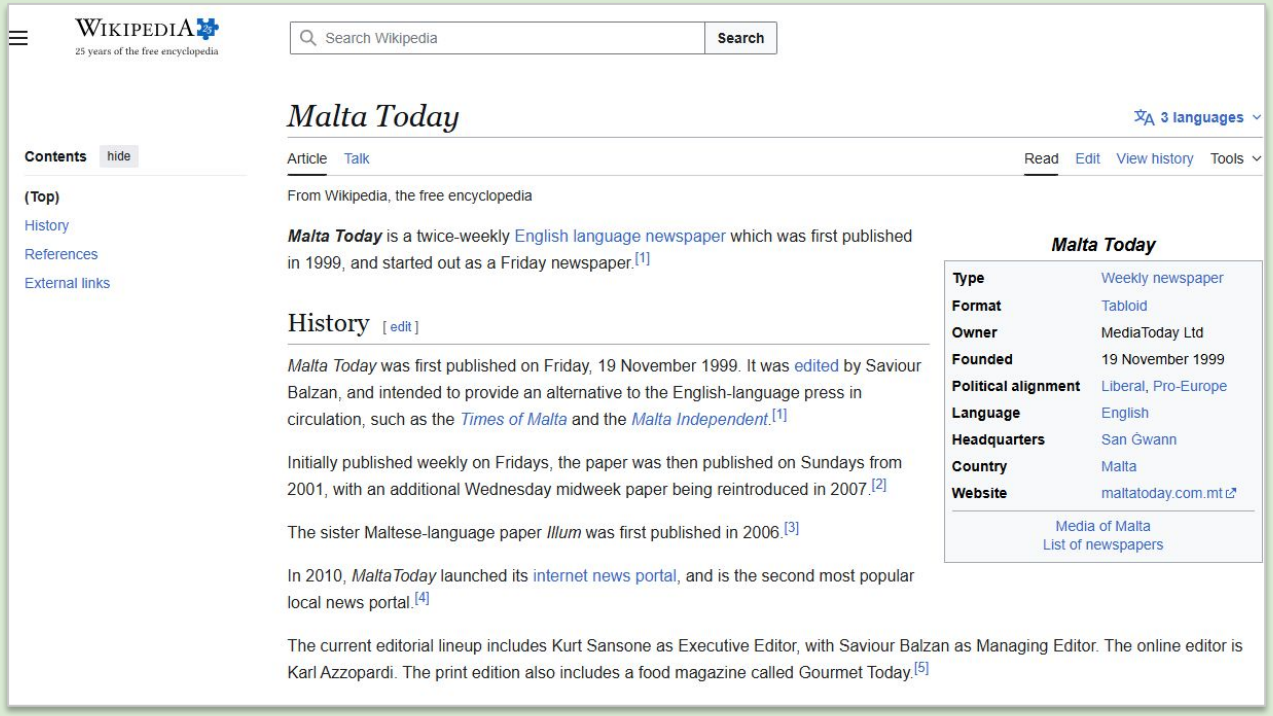

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Malta Today

3 languages

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Malta Today is a twice-weekly English language newspaper which was first published in 1999, and started out as a Friday newspaper.[1]

History [edit]

Malta Today was first published on Friday, 19 November 1999. It was edited by Saviour Balzan, and intended to provide an alternative to the English-language press in circulation, such as the *Times of Malta* and the *Malta Independent*.[1]

Initially published weekly on Fridays, the paper was then published on Sundays from 2001, with an additional Wednesday midweek paper being reintroduced in 2007.[2]

The sister Maltese-language paper *Illum* was first published in 2006.[3]

In 2010, *MaltaToday* launched its internet news portal, and is the second most popular local news portal.[4]

The current editorial lineup includes Kurt Sansone as Executive Editor, with Saviour Balzan as Managing Editor. The online editor is Karl Azzopardi. The print edition also includes a food magazine called Gourmet Today.[5]

Malta Today

Type	Weekly newspaper
Format	Tabloid
Owner	MediaToday Ltd
Founded	19 November 1999
Political alignment	Liberal, Pro-Europe
Language	English
Headquarters	San Gwann
Country	Malta
Website	maltatoday.com.mt

Media of Malta
List of newspapers

Is “Malta Today” a credible source of information?

According to information provided by Wikipedia, the newspaper is a mainstream source of information.

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News / National

Racism, intimidation, degrading treatment under Alex Dalli's watch flagged by Ombudsman

In a 30-page report, the Ombudsman listed several shocking instances of dysfunctional prison management, the degrading treatment of prisoners, racism, and the use of intimidation as an operational tool

31 January 2025, 1:57pm
by **Matthew Farrugia**
6 min read

- **Who is the author?**

There is an author who signed the article.

- **Which is its background ideology?**

A liberal approach, Pro-Europe

- **Is the newspaper, site, blog etc. linked with any particular social group's interests?**

The outlet has a Maltese-language sister paper called *Illum*

In 2010, *MaltaToday* launched its internet news portal. More information about the news outlet can be found in the "About Us" section of the media's website

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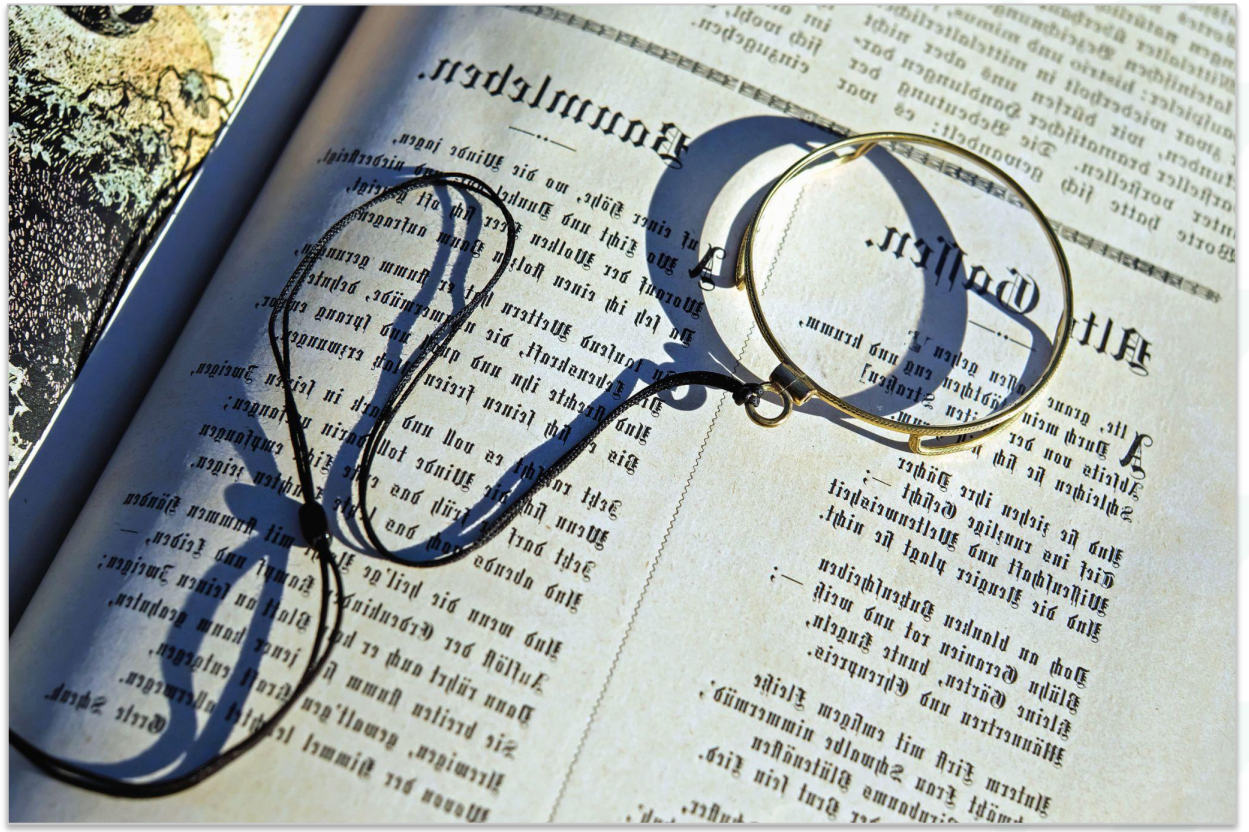
2. Find better coverage



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What do other sources say about the same topic?

Reading laterally, it appears that many other reputable news outlets have reported about the issue published by Malta Today.

We can refer to [Times of Malta](#) that published the article on January 31, 2025, using a different headline, referring to the same report quoted by Malta Today.

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What do other sources say about the same topic?

The same information published on January 31, 2025 can be found on the online news portal of Newsbook, another credible sources of information in Malta.
The name of the writer is clearly visible below the headline.

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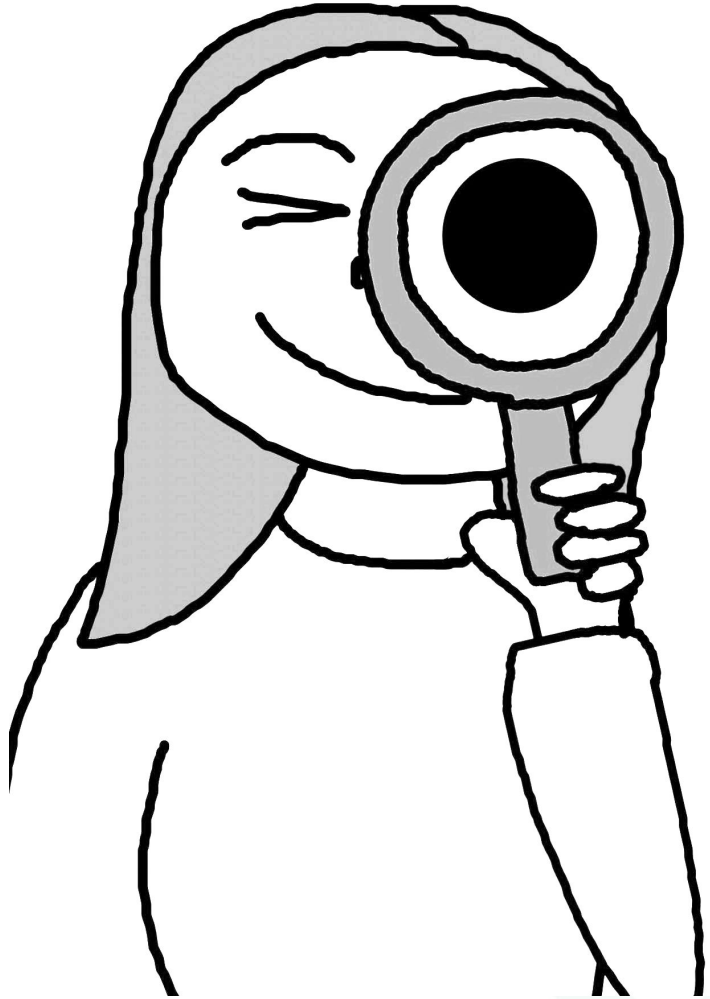
3. Trace claims, quotes and media back to the original text



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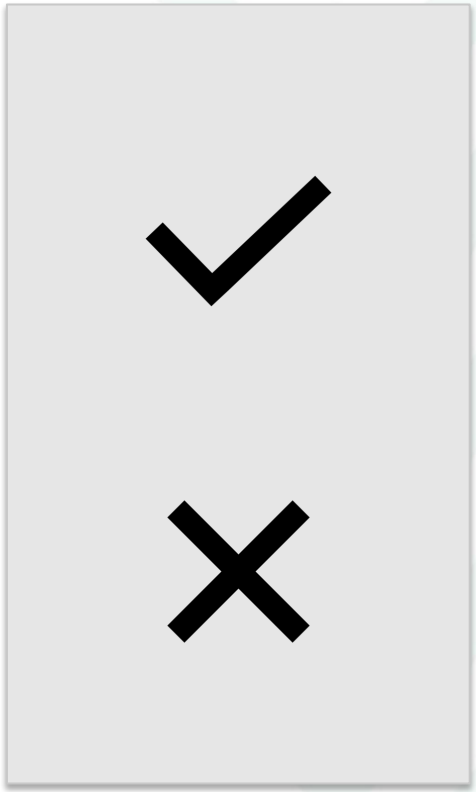
Considering the article of the newspaper:

- **Is there any reference to any official documents, any statements of official actors etc.?**
  YES

- **Is there any reference to scientific expertise, relevant reports etc.?**
  YES

- **Are there any pictures, videos that could be misleading?**
  Not in this example, but always pay attention.

- **Is there a whole text or just some quotes?**
  In this example there is a whole text, mentioning research and statistics.



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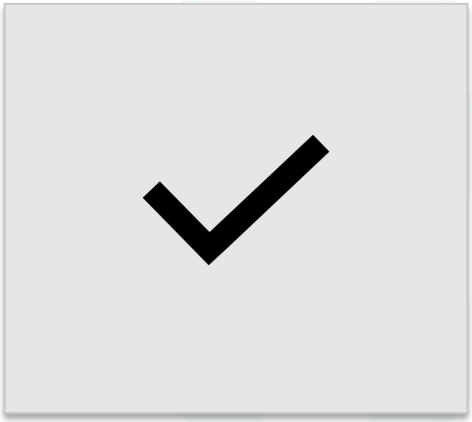
- **What do the comments say?**

When applying lateral reading to media content, examining the comments section may reveal whether users are questioning the authenticity of the content, offering corrections, or reinforcing a particular narrative. In this case, no comments challenge the accuracy of the article. However, the absence of scepticism in the comments should not be taken as confirmation of credibility.



- **Is the publication date relevant?**

The content was published on 31/01/25. Most major news outlets released their reports around the same date. This pattern may indicate that the coverage was based on a shared official document or press release from policymakers. When multiple outlets publish simultaneously, journalists should verify the original source of the information rather than assuming consensus equals accuracy.

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Google

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Snopes

LATERAL READING TOOLS

- Google
- Wikipedia
- Fact-checking websites: Snopes, Factcheck.org
- Others?

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Here are 5 points that can help you trust only reliable sources

Be careful with photos and videos taken out of context

The image or recording you've received may have nothing to do with the event in question. It could have been captured in a different place and at a different time.

When in doubt, don't share

It's always important to make sure content is real before sharing it, but in crisis situations this is essential to avoid making the situation worse.

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Here are 5 points that can help you trust only reliable sources

Rely only on official sources

We know that in stressful situations you just want someone to keep you informed. Make sure the information comes from an official source, and not from a WhatsApp contact.

Who is publishing it?

Pay attention to the outlet spreading a specific piece of information. Is it reliable? Do you know it? What are other media saying about it?

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Here are 5 points that can help you trust only reliable sources

Don’t let them play with your emotions

It’s also common for spreaders of misinformation to appeal to emotions in highly dramatic situations. Don’t let yourself be carried away, and don’t share it if you suspect it might be misleading you.

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