



Press Statement

For Immediate Release

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The International Foundation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice Welcomes 'Not Guilty' Court decision in first criminal trial of so-called 'Gay Conversion Practices'

The International Foundation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice (IFTCC) welcomes the **'Not Guilty' decision of a Malta court** in what is believed to be the **first criminal trial of so-called 'Gay Conversion Practices'**

The case featured Matthew Grech, 36, a Maltese Christian, a co-worker in Core Issues Trust (of which the IFTCC is a project) and co-director of X-Out-Loud.

Mr Grech, a 'Malta X-Factor finalist,' faced trial because Malta bans the advertising of 'conversion practices'. If convicted, he would have faced five months in prison, and/or fined 5,000 Euros. Such a decision would have sent a chilling challenge to the freedom of the press, and to anyone wishing to publicly discuss professional client-centered therapy options of people seeking help with unwanted sexual desires.

In April 2022, Mr Grech was invited by *PMnews Malta* to share the story of how he had become a Christian, leaving behind a homosexual lifestyle and unwanted same sex attraction. The interview was advertised on the channel's Facebook page. The programme presenters chose the topic of interview. Mr Grech was simply a 'guest.'

Mr Grech shared details of his childhood sexual confusion and relationships, stating that as an adult, he had been involved in homosexual relationships before becoming a Christian which, he said, had changed his life dramatically. At no point during the programme did Mr Grech invite listeners to attend therapy, or to encourage anyone to get help for unwanted same-sex attraction, although the IFTCC was mentioned. However, Silvan Agius, a cabinet expert for the European Union's Commissioner for Equality reported Mr Grech and the presenters to the police.

In the programme, Mr Grech stated that he did not agree with the term 'conversion therapy,' adding that for over 2,000 years, globally, all the mainstream Christian denominations have believed that sexuality was not an 'identity' in itself. Mr Grech has always contended he was aggressively targeted by members of the Malta Gay Rights Movement, who say Christian beliefs on marriage, human identity - and any debate surrounding LGBT lifestyles - should be treated as a criminal offence.

In 2016, Malta became the first EU country to ban what LGBT campaign groups describe as 'conversion therapy'. However, like the UK Government, the Malta Government is struggled to define what 'conversion therapy' is.

The IFTCC has welcomed today's judgment (MAR4) concerning Matthew Grech.

We are grateful that the Court has affirmed an important principle: that speaking about one's own lived experience and faith does not constitute criminal conduct. The clarity provided by this decision is significant, not only for Matthew personally, but for all who value the rule of law and the careful application of criminal statutes.

Throughout the proceedings, references were made in court documents to IFTCC and to Core Issues Trust, reflecting Matthew's past and present association with lawful organisations engaged in pastoral and educational work. It is therefore important to note that the outcome confirms that lawful discussion, testimony, and association within civil society must not be conflated with criminal activity.

This case has highlighted the importance of precision in legislative drafting and the need to ensure that criminal law is applied proportionately and with clarity. Where laws are ambiguous, there is a risk of unintended chilling effects on lawful speech, professional dialogue, and religious expression. Legal certainty benefits everyone - regardless of viewpoint.

The IFTCC remains committed to professional standards, transparency, and respectful engagement within the framework of the law. We continue to pursue constructive dialogue with regulatory bodies and remain dedicated to supporting individuals, practitioners, and faith communities who seek clarity, compassion, and integrity in matters of sexuality and personal development.

We are thankful that this case has now reached resolution and trust that today's decision will contribute to greater legal clarity going forward.

Dr Michael Davidson, Chairman of the London-registered IFTCC, who gave evidence in the case, said: *"We are relieved that the Court has provided clarity in this case. At its heart was a simple but vital principle – that individuals must be free to speak about their own lived experience without fear of criminal sanction. We remain committed to upholding professional standards, lawful dialogue, and careful engagement on matters that are often deeply personal and complex."*

• For a video of Matthew's reaction to the court verdict, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Dn4QKatGz/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

ENDS

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Editor's Notes

The IFTCC advocates for individual rights and freedoms to seek and to receive professional and pastoral help to live according to their primary values concerning their sexual identity and practices. For further details, visit: www.iftcc.org.

For information about Core Issues Trust and X-Out-Loud, visit www.core-issues.org