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**Press release issued by FAA:**

The Ongoing Rape of Wied il-Ghasel

 Flimkien ghal Ambjent Ahjar supports the residents of Mosta who are protesting against the granting of a permit for a speculative project abutting on Wied Il-Ghasel, an area which is not only a designated Nature Reserve but is protected by UN Environment Protection gradings.

This case has been characterised by serious irregularities from beginning to end. A great many policies and regulations have been broken:

-           The site notice was not displayed, depriving residents of their legal right to object.

-           The developers did not mention the protected girna and ancient rubble walls in their application, as they are leg ally obliged to do, for which reason FAA calls for annulment of the permit according to Article 39A of the DPA.

-           In spite of the fact that the site has the highest degree of protection including UN Environmental Protection, no reports have been requested from MEPA's Natural and Cultural Heritage Committees.

-           MEPA's Directorate consistently recommended refusal but these were overturned by the DCC boards with no written justification as required by the Development Planning Act.

-           The developers have already come on site on a Sunday morning and personally demolished protected old rubble walls without the necessary permits.

-           Two of the three architects involved have been MEPA board members for years. This is a clear case of conflict of interest and lack of ethics. One of the architects is involved in two cases concerning alleged irregularities in development currently before the Law Courts.

The first permit approved on this site was for a home for the elderly. FAA condemns the increasingly used device of applying for permits in Out of Development Zones for projects of public benefit or stables.  Once the area is committed for development, permits are subsequently applied for speculative projects.

Furthermore, the residents in this area are already suffering appalling environmental conditions, choked by toxic emissions from the heavy traffic of buses and trucks and constantly disturbed by traffic noise.  One dreads to imagine the effect on the health of residents of the addition of 24 flats and 50 more cars causing more traffic jams in trying to enter and exit the complex directly onto this congested main road.

Wied il-Ghasel has already been partially destroyed by the scandalous siting of cement batching plants & a micro-industry estate further down this valley, one of Malta’s most beautiful and unique ecological sites. FAA calls on MEPA to issue an Emergency Conservation Order with no further delay, before the girna suffers any ‘accidental’ damage, as well as re-examining the processing of this permit without delay. Let us at least preserve what little is left of Wied il-Ghasel for the benefit not only of Mosta residents but for all Malta.

28.03.09

[www.faa.org.mt](http://www.faa.org.mt/)