


OPINION
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Daniel Xerri is an educator

Look how successful I am!

THE recent arrest of a beefy guy who openly bragged about his wealth on social media seems symptomatic of an entrenched belief that some people have in relation to what constitutes success in Maltese society.

Mohamed Ali Ahmed Elmushraty's nickname of 'Lilu King' – proudly displayed on the number plate of his Range Rover despite the car not being registered in his name – is also indicative of how a flagrant disregard of the law might be one of the means by which you can become worthy of the Maltese epithet Il-King.

The fact that Elmushraty was charged with money laundering, tax evasion and participation in organised crime after having been previously convicted of an offence is disconcerting. It only goes to show how lax the courts have become in deterring those most tempted to relapse into criminal behaviour.

If such personifications of the 'I don't give a f*ck about the law' attitude are allowed to continue roaming the streets, persist with criminal activities and openly boast about their proceeds, then we are clearly in trouble as a country.

Many Maltese citizens commenting on this news story immediately homed in on the fact that the accused is a foreigner. Calls to dispatch Elmushraty and his accomplices back to their country were numerous. However, by adding xenophobia to the mix, one only manages to undermine the argument that a blatant disregard for the law is unacceptable.

Let us not forget that in the same week as Elmushraty's arraignment, we also read about how a Maltese family brazenly continue to occupy the Grade-1 scheduled Fort Bingemma after being served an eviction order in 2009. While on social media the squatters have uploaded photos of themselves posing in their illegally constructed swimming pool, the Lands Minister's weak excuse for not having yet evicted them is that


Mohamed Ali Ahmed Elmushraty - 'Lilu King'

he fears they will end up on the street. How can we expect such people to refrain from behaving unlawfully when they are given the minister's blessing?

What we must also not ignore is the fact that Elmushraty's attitude towards success is commonly embraced by a significant proportion of the Maltese population. While not all of them might be engaging in bullying tactics and fraud, the coveting of ostentatious signs of wealth has become part of their outlook on life.

The display of what they naively believe to equate to success has taken over their real and digital lives. They have made it their Mammon and mistakenly think they are entitled to everyone's respect in the process. What complete fools!

It has become a cliché amongst certain people that in order for you to earn the adulation of your peers, you need to post photos and reels in which you are wearing designer brands, lounging by the pool of a kitschy hotel, and posing inside a pimped-up BMW or Mercedes. The bigger the logos, the more decadent the venue and the more garish the car, the more patently clear it is you are successful.

If you are literate enough to add a platitude to your posts, then your followers can derive some wisdom. Elmushraty was particularly keen on this. For instance, he captioned one of his many macho and vulgar displays of wealth with: "It's a different type of feeling when you work hard for your own

sh*t."

These status symbols have become a means by which you tell both your real-life acquaintances and social media followers that you have made it. If you are also able to flaunt a toned body, even better. You have it all! Or maybe not.

It is utterly ridiculous that this is what some people are willing to do to be recognised as successful in contemporary Maltese society.

It was almost laughable that Elmushraty was described in the media as an entrepreneur and influencer if not for the fact that twats like him have a pernicious influence on the aspirations of those young people who follow their luxury lifestyle, as ill-gotten the gains might be.



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