



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Maltese students defend stipends from cuts, 1997

Time period notes: *It is unclear how long the campaign truly lasted.*

The evidence points to anywhere between one week and four weeks.

Additionally, it is unclear whether protests began in October 1997, prior to the official Budget announcement on November 5, 1997.

November

1997

to: November

1997

Country: Malta

Location City/State/Province: Valletta

Location Description: *streets, especially in front of the Parliament building*

Goals:

The student protesters' goal was to return the stipend amount back to its pre-1997 level, that is, at Lm60 monthly for the first year with an incremental increase each year after the first.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 034. Vigils › Candlelight
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › in front of Parliament building

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 4th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 5th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 6th segment:

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 038. Marches
- 062. Student strike › at various Junior Colleges

Notes on Methods:

Most of these methods were shown in the Youtube video but rarely described in the media.

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- University and post-secondary students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

KSU (President: Alexis Callus); Manuel Delia (former KSU president); SDM (Student Democrats of Malta)

Partners:

PULSE (President: Reuben Fenech)

External allies:

Nationalist Party of Malta; labor unions

Involvement of social elites:

Some government officials disagreed with the Labour Party's decision to cut the students' stipends.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Labor unions

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Government officials
- Nationalist Party of Malta

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:

The labor unions did not participate in the initial protest on Budget evening but did strongly oppose the budget reform in the beginning stage. The initiators/leaders participated in and led the mass protest.

Segment Length: 3 days (which puts the campaign at approximately 2-3 weeks, an approximation of the actual length of the campaign)

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

The Labour Party of Malta and, more specifically, the finance minister, Leo Brincat

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Not known

Repressive Violence:

Police did arrest and physically remove protesters from the streets.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

5 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The protesters were able to achieve reform very similar to their demands, in the form of stipends that would essentially cover all costs (with no loans). This was completed with the election of the Nationalist Party in 1998, within the 2-year time frame. After this reform, however, there were subsequent reforms within approximately five years that aimed to reduce the stipends once again.

The infrastructure of the organizations involved remained intact.

Several organizations in Malta were involved. Additionally, the Nationalist Party became greatly involved in the campaign, adding its goals onto the Party's platform for election. Once elected, the Nationalist Party sought to make immediate changes to the stipend reform.

Prior to 1997, students in Malta received a full stipend to attend a University or post-secondary school. In 1997, as a portion of the full budget reform meant to decrease the large deficit, the Labour party of Malta proposed the reduction of the student stipend from a yearly, incremental stipend to a flat Lm50 per month. This proposed reform would also make 50% of the stipend be paid in the form of a loan, as opposed to a grant (with the exception of students attending the Institute of Health Care). College students in Malta protested this stipend reform in the form of mass rallies in 1997. Their goal was to return stipends back to their level prior to 1997.

On “Budget evening” (November 5) in 1997, the day that the New Labour Government announced the national budget, hundreds of University and post-secondary students arrived outside the House of Parliament to begin their mass protest of the government’s measures to reduce stipends. Barricades at Palace Square halted the students from moving any further. The student political organization at University of Malta, SDM (Student Democrats of Malta) led the demonstrations. Pulse, a student activist group, also took large part in the protests. KSU, a general representation of all post-secondary students in Malta, also played a huge role in the protests.

After the initial rally on Budget evening, Junior College students held subsequent protests and marches. These included candlelight vigils as well as locking the school gates shut with padlocks and chains. The former KSU president, Manuel Delia, addressed and led students at one of these protests. Delia famously stated in his public address: “The Nationalists are still better than Labour”, referring to the pro-stipend political party in Malta (the Nationalists). At a candlelight vigil held in Malta, signs read “hands off our education”, attacking the government and specifically the finance minister (Leo Brincat) for their cost-cutting measures.

It was not just the students who felt strongly about this matter. There was additional controversy within government as well as within labor unions regarding the reform, as to whether it was indeed just.

On September 5, 1998, many months after the protests ended, the Nationalists gained majority in the House of Representatives in Malta and announced a new plan of action for stipends. Students would get a lump sum of Lm400 (U.S. \$1000) to buy equipment such as computers, and another one-time sum of Lm200 (U.S. \$500) for books. Additionally, students would receive Lm60 (\$150) monthly. This brought the stipend back to its pre-1997 level.

Despite these relatively immediate measures to satisfy the student protesters, stipend reform became more complicated just a few years later, with the subsequent elections. More reforms deducted from stipends for students, and the issue has become a partisan point of conflict.

Research Notes

Sources:

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Additional Notes:

Youtube video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQgs3QrH7F0&feature=player_embedded#at=57

Edited by Max Rennebohm (14/07/2011)

It is important to note that the time period for this campaign is unclear.

Additionally, this case is one in which there was temporary success.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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