



Title On 9 April the Maltese government announced its decision to open the spring hunting season in 2010. BirdLife International and BirdLife Malta believe that the decision contravenes the EU legislation and stresses that Malta has already been condemned for allowing spring hunting in the past. The new derogation contravenes the requirements of the EU Birds Directive as it clearly fails to satisfy the key conditions required by EU legislation: Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* are in unfavourable conservation status in Europe and as required by the Commission's guidance on hunting, no derogation for these species should be allowed. Secondly, insufficient clarity of the law and the extent of illegal shooting, already ongoing and amply documented in Malta, completely undermine Governmental claims to be able to enforce the bag limits and other conditions under which the derogation is supposed to take place. The decision is a set back for nature conservation, particularly disturbing as 2010 is supposed to be the International Year of Biodiversity. The European Commission should react to avoid further misuse of spring hunting derogation in Malta. Source: BirdLife Europe Newsletter