

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE  
HON. ACTING PRIME MINISTER

The Msierah Civic Committee are requesting that the name of the village be changed from Msierah to San Gwann.

2. The Street Names Committee feels that names by which localities have been known since time immemorial should be retained for the same reasons that already existing street-names are not changed as a matter of policy.

3. Dr. V.A. Depasquale, the Librarian, who has also been consulted, states that "Msierah" is the plural of "misrah" which means "an open space, a square". This does not appear to be a specific toponymic designation, but merely a popular appellation of this locality. The locality of Msierah is known also as San Gwann tal-Gharghar or ghorghar, this epithet probably originating from a species of trees - the juniper or sandarac gum tree (*Callitris Articulata*) - which at one time grew there in abundance. A chapel dedicated to San Giovanni Decollato existed there in the 17th century but the Bishop of Malta, Mgr. Balaguer, declared it unfit for divine service in 1659. It was rebuilt in 1672 and has continued to be used as a Chapel by the people of the district up to the present day.

4. The Librarian adds that, if the locality were to be renamed, it would be preferable to rename it "San Gwann" since "Msierah" is a generic designation, so much so that on the six-inch map of Malta the name "San Gwann" or "San Gwann tal-Gharghar" is given greater prominence than the name "Msierah".

5. Hon. Ministers are invited to advise whether they agree that "Msierah" should be renamed "San Gwann" as requested by the Msierah Civic Committee.

30th August, 1966.