

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 85/2006
20 July 2006

The Opposition is appalled at the insensitivity which the Government continues to show when dealing with ordinary members of the public.

The problems being experienced by Mrs Josephine Duarte and her family are a case in point. This was made public in a press report in Panorama earlier this week.

Mrs Duarte had to undergo a knee operation in hospital. She lives with her 8-year old husband in a 4RKB on the fifth floor of Blackwatch House. Her operation will render the couple housebound as her husband is already confined to a wheelchair.

They have been asking the Government for four years for a move from their current flat to a smaller flat elsewhere, as long as it is on the ground floor. The Government have refused to agree to this for unrelated administrative reasons which has nothing to do with the specific circumstances of the elderly couple.

The estranged wife of the son of the couple is claimed to owe rent to the Government, and for this reason, which has nothing to do with the pensioners themselves, the concerns of Mr and Mrs Duarte have not been met.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Housing, Charles Bruzon, said:

“It is deeply lamentable that people in Gibraltar should be in do desperate a plight that they have to resort to the media to expose what is happening to them in the expectation that this publicly will help their case.

When I accused the Government of insensitivity in the past, the Minister for Housing, Clive Beltran, accused me of making political capital. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I see people in my office every day, desperate people with serious housing problems, who have nobody else to turn to because this Government has slammed the door shut in their faces.

The Government must understand that there are real people with real problems out there. The case of Mr and Mrs Duarte has been dealt with in a cold and heartless manner when all that is needed to help this elderly couple is compassion, sensitivity and commonsense.

ENDS