

## **STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION**

81/2008

11 August 2008

Mr Momy Levy, speaking as Mayor of Gibraltar, has said that National Day should be a day of unity in which politics is put to one side. The Opposition very much regrets his comments which go to the heart of the ongoing controversy between the Government and the Opposition surrounding the downgrading of the National Day political rally.

He conveniently chooses to ignore that the political decision of the GSD, the party which he supports, is the cause of the disunity, if holding different opinions in Gibraltar is now to be labelled disunity by the Mayor of Gibraltar.

In addition, he seems to have forgotten that prior to 1996 the GSD in Opposition had no difficulty in holding different views to the then GSLP Government and in expressing them. At that time, the views included that the platform should include an Opposition speaker, that they thought it should not be called National Day, and that the flag of the day should be the UK's and not Gibraltar.

On all three issues they changed their minds in Government in 1996. National Day for 12 years has continued as it was started, namely a political rally of

the Gibraltarians united in a political act declaring their unique and separate identity as a people with a right to their land. None of this was party-political since it had the support of everyone.

That political message is not part of the municipal role that the Mayor has to carry out and therefore it is not for him to deliver.

When questioned on GBC on Thursday Mr Levy said:

“Now as far as the general comments going round town, I feel that we have politics 365 days a year and for one day for Gibraltar to be united. Forget politics. We are Gibraltarians. Forget Britain. Forget Spain.”

The Opposition disagree fundamentally that Britain or Spain should or can be left out given that the two of them in October will be supporting once again a UN consensus dealing with our future and referring to the Brussels Agreement. National Day reaffirms the rejection of the Spanish position voted by the people in the 1967 Referendum and the 2002 Referendum. It is a rejection of the Spanish argument that Gibraltar is a piece of Andalucia occupied by the British and with a local imported population, not a separate people, whose interests but not wishes should be taken into account.

It is these political issues that are supposed to be the expression of our nationhood on that day. The decision to remove the political rally and replace it with a municipal event is the cause, not the result of the disunity.

The appointment of Mr Levy as Mayor was a political decision by the GSD Government which the Opposition only supported to the extent that we wanted to make clear that we held no personal animosity towards Mr Levy as the person chosen by the Government. At the same time the Opposition clearly stated that we disagreed with the system introduced.

The justification given for Mr Levy's selection was that he is supposedly neutral and would not involve himself in politics. By defending and justifying the decision of the GSD Government to hold a "civic gathering" at the John Mackintosh Square to replace the traditional "people's public rally" at Casemates, he is supporting the policy of one political party and criticising the views of the other three parties that contested the last general election.

He is entitled to do that as an individual citizen who supports the GSD, but he is abusing his position as Mayor by providing the support of the office to the policy of the GSD Government. He can hardly be considered an unbiased and neutral political person when he is the very person at the centre of the

disagreement. As far as the Opposition is concerned, the statement by Mr Levy as Mayor of Gibraltar invalidates the terms on which he is supposed to be conducting himself in carrying out his Mayoral role.

It is not the political parties who should keep politics out of the debate on National Day, it is Mr Momy Levy who should keep party politics out of the role of Mayor of Gibraltar.

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