

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The Opposition is concerned at the delays being experienced by Gibraltarians who, having completed all the necessary requirements to marry Moroccan or other non-EU nationals, are subjected to further delays in being granted a visa for their spouse to come to Gibraltar.

It is all very well for the Government to issue glossy pamphlets and distribute them to every household saying how important it is to prevent families from breaking up. However, this is hardly consistent with the administrative delays that are being experienced by newly created families who find themselves in this predicament.

In these cases, the spouse is obliged to remain in the country of origin after the marriage has taken place pending the granting of a permit when there is no apparent justification for the delay. It would appear that the delay is a reflection of the fact that a political decision to grant approval is required in each individual case.

What makes the situation even more unacceptable is the fact this can only be done to Gibraltar-belongers since EU nationals are entitled under EU law to bring their non-EU spouses to Gibraltar, if they reside here, and any attempt to delay or prevent this can be challenged as a breach of EU rights.

It has been pointed out to the Government that whatever justification there may have been in the remote past for such practices, the reality today is that, for example, a married Spanish national has more rights to be joined by a Moroccan spouse than a Gibraltarian.

The Government cannot ignore this reality and cannot allow this unacceptable situation to continue.

ENDS