

## **OPPOSITION PRESS RELEASE 114 OF 2010 : GSD FAILINGS IN SOCIAL SERVICES AND GHA HIGHLIGHTED FURTHER**

The Opposition entirely refutes the self-serving version of events which the GSD Government and the GHA have put out in a further press release dealing with the case of the 83 year old man who spent a number of nights in Moorish Castle Prison as a result of being forcibly discharged by the GHA in his pyjamas.

The further press statement by the Government and the GHA dealing with this case highlights that they are now – as inelegantly as ever - withdrawing the earlier defamatory allegation made by them that Mr Picardo had previously made comment about this case in the media; now admitting that the comment had been by a local newspaper instead and not by Mr Picardo, as they had originally tried to impute. The press release also shows the GHA withdrawing from the position that the said gentleman was not “ill”. They are now only saying that he “did not [in their opinion] require hospitalisation”.

As they had done also in a number of other instances, the Government and the GHA have put in the public domain more details of the patient and of family members purely in order to try to defend their political position; at the expense of vulnerable people having facts about their cases aired publicly, something does not seem to concern the Government or the GHA.

The fact of the matter is that this elderly gentleman needs specialist hospital and medical care and the GHA admit that they are clearly unable to provide that much needed care because of shortages of beds at St Bernards. The GSD have long promised to develop a new facility for the care of those who are suffering from senility deriving from dementia/Alzheimer’s diseases. To date, nothing has been done in this respect.

In December of last year the Opposition highlighted the case of a 90 year old woman who was transferred to a place in KGV because there were no beds available for her at St Bernard’s Hospital or at Mount Alvernia. After her son-in-law liased with an official of the GHA on the issue, this official threatened to call the RGP to forcibly take the 90 year old woman back to her flat where she lives on her own and open the door to her house by force, if necessary, if the son-in-law refused to take her away from the hospital. **That shows that the *modus operandi* followed in the case of the 83 year old man now highlighted is followed in other instances by the management of the GHA.**

Another similar case is that of the ex-KGV patient who, after 26 years of being in a mental institution, has this week been committed also to Moorish Castle Prison. Again, the facilities at KGV have not been improved to deal with persons requiring the care which this gentleman needs; despite the repeated promises that a new facility would be provided being repeated in GSD manifestos but not delivered.

The case is also unfortunately similar to that of the 14 year old girl who had to spend time in Moorish Castle Prison because social services could not provide care for her. She was only released from jail when a kindly member of society stepped in to help. In that case (full details of which were also glaringly put in the public domain by the Minister for Social Services in a TV interview), the Department of Social Services was unable to catch the child in their “safety net” which was clearly not sufficiently resourced to provide for her needs.

In all four cases highlighted above the same thread emerges: **the inability of our community under the GSD autocracy to provide care for those who need it most at the times when they need that care the most and to help the families of such individuals.**

Commenting on these very serious failings of the GSD, Mr Picardo said: *“The Government and GHA attacks on me over my defence of this 83 years old GHA patient serve only to continue to highlight the deficiencies in the GHA itself. Within weeks, Gibraltarians have seen a child, an elderly patient and now a long term mental health patient committed to Moorish Castle Prison because the GHA and Social Services are unable to care for them. That is self-evidently a disastrous reflection of the failings of this GSD Government. **Since 2003** the GSD has been promising a facility for elderly sufferers of senility arising from dementia/ Alzheimer’s diseases. To date, nothing has been delivered in this respect; not even a temporary facility whilst the old St Bernard’s Hospital rots. **Since 2003** the GSD have been promising a new purpose built KGV. That has now been changed to a refurbishment of the old Naval Hospital which has barely commenced. Yet the works for the new airport started when the ink was barely dry on the Cordoba Agreement and will be finished by next year and the GSD are now considering bailing out the developers in the Mid-Town development. Clearly, the GSD have their spending priorities quite wrong. This is a government running on empty and causing unnecessary suffering for those in our society who are most in need of care whilst spending massive amounts on an airport terminal that will no doubt look lovely but is totally unnecessary. It is clearly time for a change of government.”*

**EDITORS :** For further information and comment: Fabian Picardo + 350 200 47786 / + 350 58960 000.