

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

66/2010

20 May 2010

The Opposition consider that it is outrageous that the incursions into Gibraltar's territorial waters by the Guardia Civil continue unabated. This shows a complete lack of respect for the sovereignty, jurisdiction and control that Gibraltar exercises in waters which are British under international law.

The Opposition understands that there was another incident on Tuesday at a distance of only about 250/300 metres off the South Mole. This time a Guardia Civil RHIB boarded a Spanish flagged cabin cruiser and proceeded to behave as if they were in Spain and not in Gibraltar. The Civil Guard obviously have no jurisdiction here. An RGP vessel attended the scene followed later by the Royal Navy and the Guardia Civil then made its way back to Algeciras and the cabin cruiser to La Linea.

It is now abundantly clear that the Spanish Civil Guard, which is a paramilitary agency of the Spanish state and whose agents are armed, continue to come in and out Gibraltar waters as they please. This is totally unacceptable and it must be stopped. The Royal Gibraltar Police, who are often the first point of contact with the intruders, are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of resources and for this reason they must be praised for what they do. It is important to note that the larger vessels which the Chief Minister said were going to be purchased to increase the capability of Gibraltar's maritime resources have still not materialised.

The Opposition is concerned that sooner or later there will be another serious incident. The approach of summer and the warmer weather means that an increasing number of Gibraltarians will take to the sea in their fishing and pleasure boats. Last year there were many reported cases of Guardia Civil patrol boats harassing local boat owners inside British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. It will be

recalled that the situation reached such a peak that the Gibraltar Government advised boat owners to shoot a distress flare or call the Royal Gibraltar Police when they were stopped by the Civil Guard.

It is clear that Gibraltar sent the wrong signals to Spain when the four Civil Guards who entered the waters of the Port and landed on our soil at the end of last year were simply detained and released within hours. The fact is that they were allowed to break the law of Gibraltar and get away with it. They were not charged, they were not taken to court and they were not sentenced for what they did. This has clearly been interpreted as a sign of weakness on the part of Gibraltar and it probably explains why the incursions and violations of our sovereignty do not stop.