



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR

Minister for Health & Civil Protection

Floor 7, Block 1, St. Bernard's Hospital, Harbour Views Road

Gibraltar

Telephone: (350) 20072266 Ext. 2005/2006

Fax: (350) 20059942

PRESS RELEASE

PR NO: 186/2008

DATE: 12 August 2008

Government considers the latest comments by a TGWU spokesman in relation to the firefighters dispute to be a blatant and misguided attempt to deceive public opinion on the matter.

It is simply not true that the Minister with responsibility for the Fire Brigade has refused to meet the Union. Irrespective of the fact that Government does not consider the dispute to be of an industrial nature, the Minister agreed with the acting District Officer of the TGWU to provide the Union with a date to meet upon her return to the office from annual leave. However, the day before she was due to start her leave (25 July) she was informed that the firefighters had rejected her offer to provide a specific date to meet upon her return, and that they wanted the Union to write to her instead. The acting District Officer accepted that the Minister would obviously not be in a position to reply to his letter until her return to the office. The Minister categorically refutes that any deadline was given or agreed to, as is now being alleged, either verbally or in writing.

The Minister returned to her office yesterday to find that the firefighters had decided, despite what she had agreed with the Union, to escalate their action. Government finds this behaviour on the part of the firefighters and their Union to be totally irresponsible and indicative of a desire on their part to perpetuate the dispute. It vindicates the Government's position all along that this is a manufactured dispute and that there are other motives at play.

The MOD have now made alternative arrangements to provide cover to any callout within MOD areas. The very short notice given by the firefighters of their intended action (literally over the weekend) is yet another indication of their irresponsible stance.

The firefighters have constantly been moving the goalpost since this dispute began in March. They have shifted the spotlight from one issue to another as it has suited them. Government was willing, however, to sit down and discuss issues which appeared to be of great concern and importance to the firefighters, according to their Union, such as the ongoing disciplinarys and health and safety matters. Through their latest inexplicable action they have purposely denied themselves the opportunity of possibly finding a resolution to these matters, leading the Government to conclude that the one and only thing which really concerns them is to be able to hold parties within the Station, and to have unregulated and uncontrolled access to the same.