



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR  
PRESS OFFICE  
No.6 Convent Place  
Gibraltar  
Tel:20070071; Fax: 20043057**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Government condemn deliberate delays at the frontier**

The Government condemns the lengthy and deliberate delays to cross the frontier into Spain which have been experienced by Gibraltarians and visitors to Gibraltar.

The frontier with Spain has not operated normally since the day it opened and the Spanish Government has often used it as a means of applying political pressure on Gibraltar. It will be recalled that the situation deteriorated to such a degree a few years ago, that a dedicated frontier complaints office was opened.

The traffic flow was particularly bad yesterday, Sunday, with cars at times taking more than five hours to cross into Spain. The Government understands that the usual average number of cars crossing into Spain is between 150-300 every half hour. The average number of cars crossing into Spain on Sunday was between 30 - 60 an hour.

This shows that the delays are unrelated to volume of traffic.

The Government, in a humanitarian gesture towards those stuck in the queue, distributed over 1700 bottles of water and, in addition to this, two small water tankers have been supplying water at the Eastern Beach roundabout and then at the frontier. This was coordinated by the Minister for Traffic, the Hon. Paul Balban and the Minister for Utilities, the Hon. Steven Linares. The Government is very grateful to the volunteers who distributed the water.

The Government considers that the delays are an affront to the principle of freedom of movement of EU nationals through an EU frontier. The checks being conducted by the Spanish authorities are excessive and disproportionate with no regard for the need to operate a red and green channel.

The Chief Minister, the Hon. Fabian Picardo MP, who is currently in London, has already been in touch with the UK Government and urged them to take up the matter with Spain at the highest level. He will take the opportunity afforded by Gibraltar Day to make the point to a distinguished audience.

The Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Joseph Garcia, who is Acting Chief Minister in Mr Picardo's absence, has himself contacted Parliamentarians in the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the European Parliament. This will continue and will be extended.

The Cabinet will be meeting this morning in order to discuss and determine a sustained local and international response to the latest hostile actions taken by the Spanish Government against Gibraltar.

The Acting Chief Minister, Dr Joseph Garcia said: "The attempt to use the frontier as a political weapon against Gibraltar has not worked in the past and it will not work now. The action taken by Spain is unfriendly, unneighbourly and un-European and the Gibraltar Government will expose this in whatever fora is available to us."