



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR**  
Ministry for Health & Environment  
Joshua Hassan House  
Secretary's Lane  
Gibraltar

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **DR CORTES IS INTERVIEWED ON THE 'TODAY' PROGRAMME**

On Thursday morning, Minister John Cortes gave an excellent three-minute interview to the highly influential 'Today' programme on BBC's Radio 4, a programme with over 7 million listeners.

The BBC's Justin Webb began by suggesting that Gibraltar's famous Barbary macaque apes were getting above themselves and starting to bite people so there is the possibility that they will be returned to nature. 'Are they getting more aggressive than they were?' he asked Dr Cortes.

'Not any more aggressive but they do have this interaction with people and they are used to being fed by tourists,' the Minister replied.

Dr Cortes went on to explain that, the incidence of bites has fallen but recently there have been one or two high profile bites.

The interviewer asked if there were now too many apes to which Dr Cortes replied that there were about 230 apes which was 'rather more than the number we think we should have. We want to get them back to nature on the Rock and persuade people not to feed them. Secondly, we are looking to send some back to North Africa.'

The Minister went on to explain that some apes might be released in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and Tunisia. He said that there had been discussions about this as there are only a few thousand left in the wild.

In the past they used to be culled in Gibraltar but 'that is not the right thing to do with such a vulnerable species.' Any export of apes to North Africa would have to be done very carefully and with the right scientific support.

Dr Cortes ended by explaining that, whilst the macaques were an important tourist attraction. 'We like our monkeys but I would ask our tourists to respect them as wild animals and not to come and give them chocolates.'