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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**GSD Purposely Confuse Public on Legal Aid**

In the latest in a series of party political adverts which the GSD has placed only in the Gibraltar Chronicle, they have alluded to the alleged costs in legal aid of the trial of the Marrache brothers.

Once again, their advertisement completely ignores everything said on the subject in Parliament during the Budget Debate.

The Chief Minister had to explain in Parliament last week why the Government had no option but to amend the Legal Aid provisions for complex fraud cases to allow the Marrache brothers and Ms Leanne Turnbull to instruct leading lawyers to conduct their defences.

Mr Picardo had first to scold Mr Figueras for getting the wrong definitions of legal aid (criminal cases) and legal assistance (civil cases). That distinction is understood by first year lawyers, but not by Mr Figueras who got it wrong throughout his intervention!

Mr Picardo explained that the Marraches had started a legal challenge to the legal aid provisions. The Chief Minister also explained to the House that the advice which had been given to the Government was that if the legal aid rules were not changed in this way there was a likelihood that the Marrache brothers would be discharged and not tried. The Government felt that this would not have been in the public interest and therefore had no option but to amend the legal aid rules.

The discharge of the Marrache brothers without a trial would have been very bad for Gibraltar's reputation as a finance centre and even generally as a place where everyone is equal before the law.

The Minister for Justice has already repeatedly explained that he is shortly to publish the reforms to both Legal Aid and Legal Assistance. These will have taken about two and a half years. The GSD complain about this although they did nothing for 16 years, even in the four years in which their current Leader, Mr Feetham, was Minister only for Justice and nothing else. Talk about political hypocrisy!

The reference to the £4m cost just helps to highlight another part of the recurrent expenditure which has been incurred and which was not related to GSLP/Liberal spending but these costs would have been incurred in any event whichever party was in Government.

Minister for Justice and acting Chief Minister, Hon Gilbert Licudi QC MP, said: "The GSD advert sets out to sensationalise and purposely ignores that if they had been in Government they too would have had to make changes to the law to allow these costs to be paid. The legal advice we had was clear and unequivocal and Mr Feetham as Minister for Justice would have had no alternative but to act or see the Marrache brothers very likely succeed in being discharged. At least we are almost ready with the reform of the rest of the Legal Aid & Assistance Act which practitioners have been crying out for now for over a decade. The GSD delivered no reform in 16 years of government - despite Mr Feetham being Minister with responsibility only for Justice for four years. We will do much better than that and deliver our reform, as I have already announced, in this calendar year."