



PRESS RELEASE

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Honouring a Generation: Evacuation memorial event on Friday

A memorial event to mark 75 years of the wartime evacuation of the civilian population of Gibraltar will take place on Friday. This coincides with the very day 75 years ago when the first vessel transported Gibraltarian evacuees on the Government evacuation scheme across the Straits from Gibraltar to French Morocco. The Government has taken the view that it is important to commemorate the event and to honour that generation.

It will be recalled that the people of Gibraltar were originally evacuated to French Morocco. They were then re-evacuated back to Gibraltar and then onwards to London, Jamaica, Madeira and Northern Ireland. The Government has invited dignitaries, political and academic, from each of these four centres in order to thank those who played host to the evacuees during their hour of need.

The dignitaries are:

1. Councillor Mrs Audrey Wales MBE and Mr Christopher Wales, Mayor of Ballymena, Northern Ireland;
2. Councillor Billy Ashe and Mrs Beatrice Ashe, Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. Northern Ireland;
3. Councillor Mercy Umeh and Ms Frances Umeh, The Worshipful the Mayor of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham;
4. City Councillor Dra Madalena Nunes representing the Mayor of Funchal in Madeira; and
5. Dr Suzanne Francis-Brown who is the Curator of the University of the West Indies Museum in Jamaica which is now sited in the old Camp Gibraltar.

The Memorial event will take place on Friday at 6pm Casemates Square and, whilst there will be plenty of seating provided for the elderly, there will also be standing room for the public. The event will open with a performance from local trio, Mount Opera, who will sing a number of songs from the wartime era. These will be followed by the reading of various extracts from relevant texts relating to the Evacuation including the original Order by which women, children, the elderly and the infirm were instructed to leave Gibraltar. The texts will be read by persons who were

themselves evacuees and there will also be short personal testimonials from evacuees who went to Madeira, Jamaica, London and Northern Ireland.

The event at Casemates will be followed by a reception at Grand Battery House to which those evacuees who have registered have been invited. The Government had originally intended to hold the memorial at the Evacuation Monument in Waterport Terraces. However, the fact that over 800 evacuees have registered has meant that it had to be moved to Casemates Square which is a much larger venue. Instead, the Chief Minister Fabian Picardo accompanied by the Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Joseph Garcia, will be unveiling a commemorative plaque at the Evacuation Monument earlier on Friday afternoon.

A short film depicting the Evacuation will be shown during the Reception in Grand Battery House.

Commenting on the commemoration, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The Memorial service coincides with an exhibition about the Evacuation at the John Mackintosh Hall. This will continue until 28 May. There will also be a lecture on the evacuation to Jamaica by Dr Suzanne Francis-Brown, who is the Curator of the University of the West Indies Museum, tomorrow Thursday at 6.30pm at the Garrison Library. This lecture is open to general public but it is important to remind former evacuees that they should register with the Government Archives if they wish to be invited to the other Evacuation commemorations.

The Government considers that it is important to mark this defining moment for us all. The wartime evacuation of the civilian population was a watershed in the history of Gibraltar and it is only right and proper that, 75 years on, the Government should honour the sacrifices made by a generation at that time.”