



PRESS RELEASE

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The Chief Minister's Easter Message 2020

Good afternoon

And especially a good afternoon to our senior citizens and those of you with particular vulnerabilities.

I can report to you that as at today we have taken 1,558 swabs for COVID-19.

18 are pending and 1,540 results have been received.

Of those 1,392 were negative.

129 were confirmed as COVID positive.

45 of those cases remain active.

84 are already deemed recovered.

We have had returned all of the swabs in the random sample of 400.

Of these, 10 had COVID.

7 are active and 3 already recovered.

Having given you those statistics, today, instead of a press conference, I want to reflect on these seminal past four weeks.

I also want to look forward to the challenge of the weeks to come.

I know I have had some very tough messages for you all these past four weeks.

We have had to take very tough decisions.

In doing so, we have been ably assisted by many dedicated and quite remarkable people who care very much about you.



Yesterday marked just 100 days since the first reported death from COVID-19.

Yesterday, Good Friday, the worldwide death toll from the disease exceeded 100,000.

That is an average of one thousand dead each day from this deadly virus.

So, all the tough measures we have imposed are for a very good reason.

And you can see that they are having the required effect.

I know how difficult and frustrating it is for you to be obliged by your own Government to remain indoors.

We are conscious that we are depriving you of the touch and embrace of your loved ones.

So believe me, when I tell you I am committed to ensuring that these measures should not last a minute longer than necessary.

The imposition of these controls on your freedom of movement are an indelible scar on my heart.

They are a constant strain on my conscience.

That is why, in Cabinet, we are already seeking to work on appropriate exit strategies to lift the restrictions imposed as soon as possible.

And I wish I could tell you we already have all the answers.

I wish I could say it is all over.

That day will come.

But it is not here yet.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel.

That is why my message to you today is a message of hope.

Hope in a better, fairer future.

Because I see amongst us a spirit of defiance and survival that has not been seen since the Evacuation and the closed frontier generation.

I have seen a new generation of Gibraltarians show a strength of character which many had thought was (existed) only in the past.

I have always known it was there.



The stoicism of our previous generations runs in our veins.

It is in our DNA.

And the outpouring of generosity I have seen from our community has been remarkable.

The fact is our history has taught us never to take things for granted.

It has taught us to pool together in times of challenge.

And it has taught us to defend our people with all our heart and soul.

That is why we have all been ready to make huge sacrifices to protect those whom we most value and treasure.

For our children, our parents, our grandparents, our friends.

For each and every one of us.

By protecting you, we are protecting ourselves.

And that is who we are as a people.

I find it hard to put my gratitude in words.

I cannot thank the essential workers on the front line enough.

Every single one of our GHA employees, our law enforcement agencies and civil contingency teams.

Our teachers, who are working to ensure our frontline workers can be at the coal face.

To every single delivery driver, supermarket attendant, refuse collector, every single cleaner, every single one of our active public servants.

You have reminded many of how important you are to the infrastructure of our lives.

I want to also thank the Leader of the Opposition and my fellow Parliamentarians for their support at this time.

All of Parliament, Government and Opposition, understands what we are facing.

And we are united and determined to minimise the impact of this pandemic on you.

And every single volunteer.

You are stepping forward to work when you could happily sit this one out.



But that is not who you are.

That is not who we are.

Thank you.

And as ever in Gibraltar, the people working and stepping forward are of every religion and none.

We are in the midst of Easter and Passover and a week from the start of Ramadan.

So I want to reflect on one aspect of what is common to Christianity, Judaism and Islam at this time.

That is RENEWAL

REFLECTION.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT.

Whatever your religion, or none, these are universal values.

They may be what the confinement will have accentuated in all of us.

All your stoicism, sacrifice and your entrepreneurial spirit will be important when we start to emerge from this crisis.

COVID-19 will leave a cavernous crack in our economy.

We will emerge into a different economic reality.

We have enjoyed decades of plenty.

Now we must REFLECT that our plenty came only because generations before had made great sacrifices.

To ensure that our children, our future generations, return to plenty, we will all have to sacrifice.

Life will be different for us from now on.

Not worse.

Not harsh.

But certainly challenging.

And this will be our engine for SELF-IMPROVEMENT.



What we have achieved in five weeks is a measure of our capacity to improve as a community.

We have pulled out all the stops to provide whatever the GHA needs.

We have also done and will do what is necessary to support employers and employees in our economy.

The global economic implications of what is happening around us will spare no nation.

The United Kingdom and Spain, the two countries we most interact with, will be faced with major challenges to reboot their economies.

There is no doubt that a global recession is coming.

The world may be about to face the first economic depression in almost a century.

We are certainly about to face the worst economic downturn in living memory.

Gibraltar will not be immune from its effects – although we will fight to ensure our size protects us from its worst effects.

We must ensure that economic downturn does not lead to social inequality or injustice.

And we must ensure that we take forward the positive changes that we have made to how you interact with government during this period.

These will be a strength for our future.

So, to all my fellow Gibraltarians I say this:

The policy that has driven my politics is that Gibraltar's greatest asset is you, its people.

Today, I am demanding of you social distancing.

Tomorrow, Gibraltar will demand of you social responsibility.

Let me be clear.

Gibraltar has done and is doing what it can do for you and all of us.

From now, you too must do more for Gibraltar.

There can be no more free rides.

I call on you to play your part in our recovery.

To work for the common good and not just for selfish gain.



Working together.

Working harder than ever.

Together, we will overcome the heavy cost that these unprecedented times will impose on all of us.

Together, we will restart and recover.

Together, we will seize the future for our children

And when our children and grandchildren look back, they will be proud of what we did in our time and generation.

Let 2020 go down in Gibraltarian history as the year of our reckoning.

And let us go down in history as the generation of Gibraltarians who were equal to this challenge.

With our younger generation in particular being our beacon of hope.

Let us be the architects of a great Gibraltarian RENEWAL.

A generation of Gibraltarians who took the difficult decisions to do the right thing.

The generation that bravely steered a new course.

Sustainable.

Socially just.

And aiming for the long-term prosperity of our community.

So I call on you to play your part.

Right now, that means helping us slow the spread of the virus.

Play your part by staying safe in your homes.

Play your part by working as hard as you can.

And play your part by staying healthy.

Gibraltar needs you.

All of you.

Thank you.