

Monitoring the right to life on the
Euro-African Western Border.
Year 2021



#RightToLife2021

**CA MINANDO
FRONTERAS**



DATA TO SUPPORT THE RIGHT TO MEMORY

The figures presented in this monitoring report are intended to provide information for migrant communities and victims' relatives as they seek to reveal the truth behind the events taking place at the Western Euro African Border.

This information represents a much-needed step on the road to healing for those whose loved ones have died or gone missing, casting light on their plight. It also points to the need to advocate for policies to deliver justice and bring an end to harmful dynamics at the border.

Our group has been collecting information on victims systematically since 2016, providing us with a longitudinal perspective on the necropolitics of border regions.

Gathering data about people who die while on the move is a complex process as they often take irregular routes where their rights are not acknowledged and their existence is denied. The vast majority of deaths on the Western Euro African Border occur at sea, where most bodies disappear without a trace. The figures presented in this report are the product of a determination to respect the victims' memory amid the abjection of their persecutors.

Despite the difficulties involved in documenting the dead and missing, our group's work as part of the Observatory of Human Rights has enabled us to verify the numbers presented thoroughly. All data are from primary sources and are fed through our databases. By processing the figures, we are able to make our findings available to migrant communities, victims' families and society as a whole, helping to drive actions that advocate for life over necropolitics.

A YEAR OF TRAGEDY: TWELVE DEATHS EACH DAY

The deterrence and contention policies imposed by Europe and Morocco on Western Mediterranean routes have steadily pushed migration flows towards the Atlantic, making the Canary Islands the main destination for people on the move.

The area's geography, the hazards of the ocean and the geostrategic interests at stake in disputed maritime and land territories in the area stretching from Laayoune to the Mauritanian border make this one of the most perilous active migratory routes in the world.

In 2021, an average of twelve people died each day attempting to reach Spanish shores on one of several migratory routes.



The year began with high numbers of victims in January and February, the vast majority of whom were travelling on boats from Mauritania. March was the month with the fewest deaths, although the total figure remains over one hundred.

In April, the number of people who died or went missing on the Western Euro African Border began to rise. One of the peaks in mortality came at the most volatile point of the diplomatic crisis between Morocco and Spain. From late May to early June, in the space of just fifteen days, 481 lives were claimed at sea in a total of ten incidents.

The death toll also rose as more inflatable boats departed from shores between Cape Bojador and Guelmim. These fragile, unstable vessels are more commonly used to cross the Mediterranean and are all the more hazardous in the Atlantic.

In May and June, there was an increase in the number of women and children among the victims. A total of 276 women and their children died in these two months alone. The victims came from sub-Saharan Africa and were transiting through Morocco.

August saw a huge surge in numbers, with more than 600 people dying or going missing on the border in 21 separate incidents. Although the situation improved somewhat in September, the number of victims remained at a shocking 200 to 400 people. November brought a further rise in deaths and disappearances in small boats mainly from Mauritania, but also from Senegal and Gambia. At the time of writing¹, the terrifying figures recorded show how the number of tragic incidents continues to grow steadily year after year and deadly policies have become entrenched at the border.

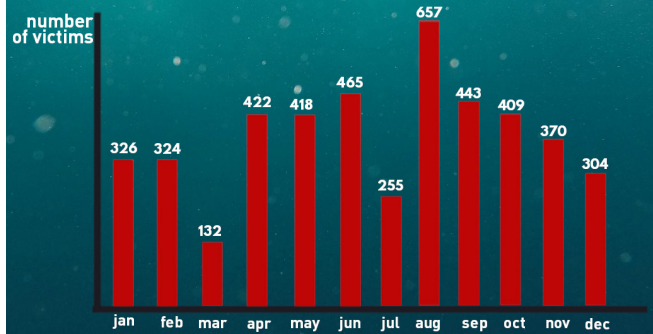
FACTS FROM 2021: FIGURES OF PAIN

4404
victims

on the access routes to
Spain in 2021

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+102,95%

increase in the number of victims
at the border compared to 2020

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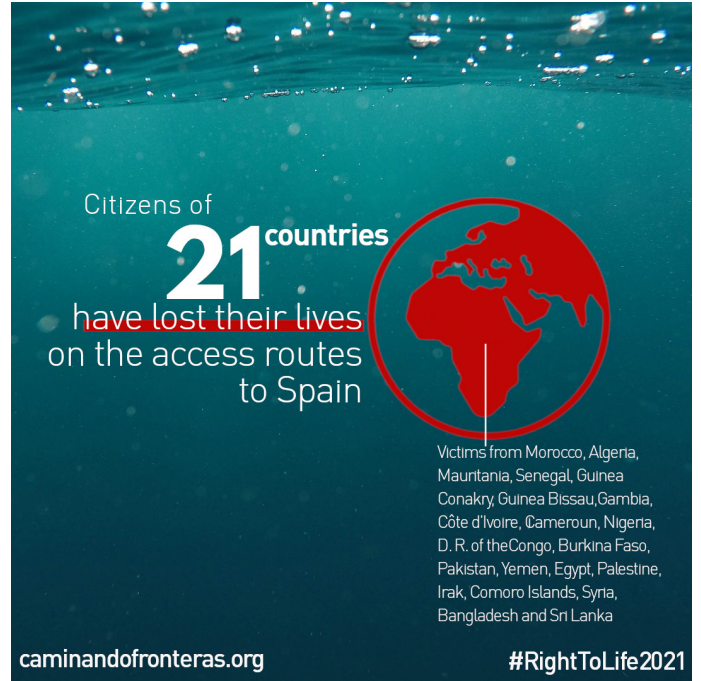
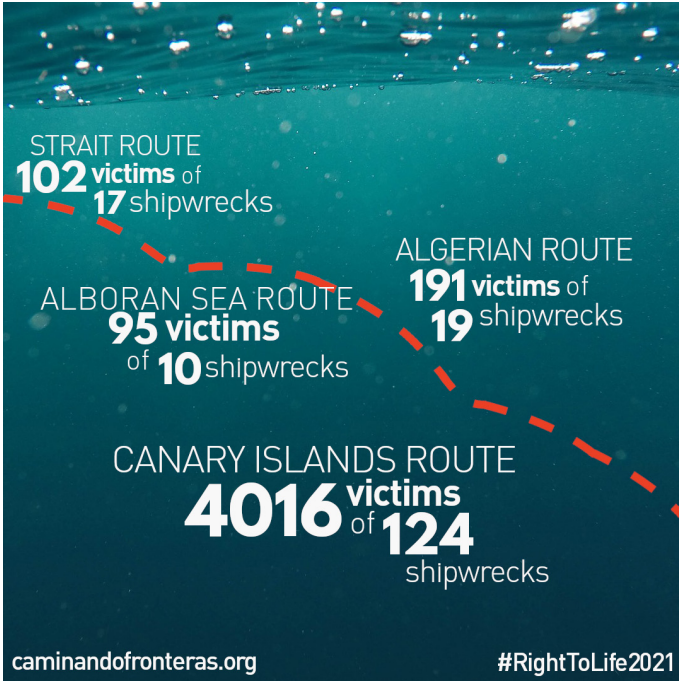
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94,80% of the victims disappear
at sea without their bodies being recovered



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CANARY ISLANDS ROUTE

“CAYUCOS” BOATS ADRIFT

Boats from Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia:

The migratory route from Mauritania, Gambia and Senegal is particularly treacherous due to the huge distance the boats have to cross and the nature of the ocean. People venture further into open seas to escape patrol boats, then struggle to find their way once they lose sight of the coastline. This report recorded 26 tragedies involving wooden boats that had set off from Mauritania, 20 of which vanished altogether. During the last year, two boats reappeared in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands, carrying some bodily remains.

The immense distance travelled by the boats makes search efforts a difficult task. Collaboration between the various rescue services is hampered by the fact that it encompasses five countries, whose cooperation is focused on migration control rather than on defending the right to life.

Like many other young people, M. S. from Mali left Mauritania and headed to the Canary Islands. He met B. F. at the house where they waited to board the boat that would take them to Spain. He met another survivor – A. K., a woman from Ivory Coast – on the beach moments before setting off. There were 59 people on board, including two women and a child, and they set sail into the Atlantic on 5 April. They last contacted their families on a beach in Nouakchott. After 19 days adrift at sea, the three of them were the only survivors.

“I would open his mouth to feed him a scrap of biscuit with a bit of water that was left and tell him to swallow. When they found us, I no longer had the strength to eat the biscuit myself, but he was weaker. He looked dead. He’s only a little boy. He was the one who spent longest in hospital”, says M. S., explaining how he fed B. F. during their days lost at sea.

Our group was alerted that the boat had gone missing on 20 April by calls from families in Mauritania. They were eventually found on 26 April 500 kilometres south of the island of El Hierro. A cargo ship had detected them and stayed in the area until a plane from the air force arrived to rescue the three survivors. They were taken to Tenerife along with the 24 bodies that remained on the boat.

We enjoyed a stroll with M. S. along the streets of Tenerife once he had made a full physical recovery from the tragedy. We talked about his children and joined him as he met up with B. F. for the first time since the rescue because the boy had spent so long in hospital.

We spoke about the first time they called their families to say they were alive and how lucky they had been. So far, they have not undergone any special monitoring or received individual support. Their families are far away and their fellow travellers are all they have to ease the pain. M. S and B. F. try their best to tell us about three

of the 24 bodies in greater detail. The man tells us how important it is to identify them and have them buried as Muslims. That is what the families want, but it is no easy task.

“We do not have the means to repatriate him. What are we supposed to do?”, asks the brother of M. K., one of the deceased. Frustration and despair are rife in our phone calls to the families of those who died on the boat.

The bodies were eventually buried in Tenerife, but not according to the Islamic precepts the victims had followed throughout their lives. **“We would have liked to say goodbye to them here, in our town”**, said a woman who had lost two of her relatives in the tragedy.

Four wooden boats have gone missing between Senegal and Gambia. Despite the small number of incidents, the large numbers of people on the boats led to a total of 472 victims.

The boat set off from Gunjur in Gambia on 9 November with 170 people on board. Our group was alerted by one passenger’s sister on 20 November.

“I have contacted people in Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania... But nobody has heard anything, nobody has answers”, says Y. S., a representative of the Gambia National Youth Council. We were told that this organisation alone has some 50 people involved in search, contact and family support efforts. **“I personally knew quite a few of those people... Some of them were friends, others were colleagues. It is hard not knowing what has happened to them”**, explains a young Gambian.

As we have seen on other occasions, the large numbers of people travelling on the boat prompted intense search efforts by their home communities.

The first to alert us was the sister of one of the men who had gone missing, a 22-year-old. **“He made the decision along with some neighbourhood friends. We had no idea... We are calling organisations from all over, but nobody is answering. Nobody says anything, nobody knows anything.”**

Boats from Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia

VICTIMS	REASONS FOR EXPULSION FROM THEIR COUNTRIES	TRAGIC INCIDENTS
<p>Most of the people who set off from Mauritania come from Mali, followed by Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Ivory Coast and Guinea-Conakry.</p> <p>The majority are young men and adolescents aged 14 to 18 years old.</p>	<p>Armed conflict</p> <p>Impoverishment aggravated by the pandemic and extractivism by European companies.</p>	<p>30</p>

A YEAR WHEN INFLATABLE BOATS CAME TO STAY

Inflatable boats setting sail between Guelmim and Cape Bojador:

From late 2020, we began to notice an increase in the number of inflatable boats on the Canary Islands route. Thirty-three percent of these sailings ended in tragedy during the first six months of 2021.

“Despite spending days at sea, nobody had died yet. We were hanging on. But then the Navy showed up and bore right down on top of us. I don’t know if they wanted to kill us or didn’t know how to rescue us, but the dinghy practically broke, we fell into the water and they were throwing ropes for us. I’m a good swimmer and I got people out who were about to sink. None of the Navy men dove into the water. Once we were all on board, I realised there were only 28 of us – 17 were missing”, F. K. recalled sadly after surviving the tragedy. The boat had left Laayoune on 31 May with 45 passengers, including eight women. Our group was alerted by the families and we informed the rescue authorities. It was not until 4 June that we managed to contact the vessel, which had spent several days adrift before entering an area with telephone reception. It took many hours for the rescue to take place, despite the people on the boat having provided their location. Eventually, it was confirmed to be a shipwreck. A woman in a coma and three men were taken away to the hospital in Laayoune and the rest of the survivors were deported. The Navy did not make any attempt to find the 17 bodies left at sea.

The factors leading to death include boats in poor condition and delays in search and rescue operations, as well as difficulties in coordinating between Spain and Morocco to protect lives at sea.

“The waves were taller than the dinghy. They washed people away, sweeping them off the boat. There were rocks everywhere tearing up the boat. We ended up making it to shore somehow while the gendarmerie looked on and did nothing but arrest us”, one of the survivors painfully recounts. The inflatable boat set off with a total of 58 people on board, many of whom were from Comoros. Fifteen were swallowed up by the sea and only the bodies of two women and one man were retrieved.

A boat set sail from the south of Laayoune on 3 August and was found on 17 August on a beach in Nouadhibou. Only seven survivors remained on board, one of whom was a woman. The other 47 victims had disappeared into the ocean. When we contacted the survivors of the shipwreck, who were from Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal and Guinea-Conakry, they were at a detention centre in Mauritania and feared expulsion into the desert. Their detention conditions were terrible and they were devastated after the horror they had been through at sea. ***“We don’t want to get cast out, dumped on the desert border with Mali. We want to be sent back to our countries in dignity so we can heal from the pain we’ve experienced”***, prayed one of the survivors.

The number of shipwrecked inflatables rose from May to July. In the first two weeks of August alone, six of the tragedies recorded involved this kind of vessel. Later in the month, satellite telephones began to be found on board. This reduced the number of tragedies as it allowed those on board to make contact and share their position when they came adrift to activate search and rescue teams.

Inflatable boats Guelmim and Cape Bojador		
VICTIMS	REASONS FOR EXPULSION FROM THEIR COUNTRIES	TRAGIC INCIDENTS
Migrants transiting through Morocco. The predominant nationalities are Guinea-Conakry and Ivory Coast, followed by Senegal, Mali, Comoro Islands, Gambia, Ghana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad. There are also some Asian victims, although they are far fewer in number: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Yemen, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.	<p>Armed conflict.</p> <p>Impoverishment aggravated by climate change.</p> <p>Extractivism by companies.</p> <p>Gender-based violence.</p>	34

VIOLENT TRANSIT: HOSTAGES TO GEOSTRATEGIC INTERESTS

Boats setting sail between southern Dakhla and Cape Bojador:

During the first seven months of the year, the boats departing from this area stood out for the high numbers of women on board. Outnumbering the men on all boats, they were mainly mothers passing through Morocco with their children.

The vessels used in this area are wooden, making them sturdier than inflatables, but the passengers they carry report that they spend a long time waiting in the desert before setting sail. The women explained that during the wait, which can last more than a month, they were exposed to the elements and the harsh conditions of the desert, depending on local people for supplies. They were exhausted by the time they embarked on their sea crossing and many lives were claimed by cold, hunger and thirst.

“There was hardly any water. They said we would be waiting for five days and there was only enough food and water for that length of time. It ended up being twenty. I had practically no milk in my breasts and begged desperately for someone to buy me milk from a chemist for my baby. I also stayed in the ‘quiet’ place in Nador, but it was different there; you didn’t spend so long waiting and it isn’t the desert. People are very scared in Dakhla because it is so dangerous, the Arabs are armed and you have to get on the boat because

they could shoot you. I had never experienced anything like it. By the time we got on the boat we were already very tired, both me and the baby. We didn't have the strength to make the journey, but we had to get on", says A. W. with a quivering voice. She does not want to talk about the end of the journey, which saw her return to Morocco without her son or her sister, who were travelling on the same vessel. They spent four days adrift because they lost their way and decided to turn back, but by then the cold, hunger and thirst had taken their toll on the people on board.

They were travelling on a vessel with 62 people that set sail between Cape Bojador and Dakhla. They called on 28 September to ask for help. They needed rescuing urgently. The Navy never came and the sea dragged them towards the beach, where they capsized on 30 September. Only two women and three men survived. Sixteen bodies were washed up on the shore and the rest disappeared into the sea.

From August onwards, boats of North Africans began to appear on this section of the Atlantic route. They would journey from the centre of Morocco and wait in the desert in Dakhla before heading towards the Canary Islands. Several of the vessels have vanished altogether, leaving the victims' families in limbo. This highlights the awful truth of the victims claimed by ocean borders: many shipwrecks disappear without a trace.

Boats southern Dakhla- Cape Bojador		
VICTIMS	REASONS FOR EXPULSION FROM THEIR COUNTRIES	TRAGIC INCIDENTS
Moroccans and migrants transiting through Morocco. The predominant nationalities are Guinea-Conakry and Ivory Coast, followed by Senegal, Mali, Comoro Islands, Gambia, Ghana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad. There were also victims from Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Yemen, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Of the victims, 43.14% were women and children.	<p>Armed conflict.</p> <p>Impoverishment aggravated by climate change.</p> <p>Impoverishment aggravated by COVID-19.</p> <p>Extractivism by companies.</p> <p>Gender-based violence.</p> <p>Violence against the LGBTQ+ community.</p>	39

MEDITERRANEAN ROUTES

THE 35° 50' MARK AND THE 'ITALIAN' DRIFT

In light of the militarisation of the Mediterranean border and the territorial interests at play in the Atlantic (both maritime and terrestrial), the number of attempts to cross the sea from northern Morocco to Spain is falling.

Despite this decline, deaths continue to occur due to a lack of resources for rescue. The policy applied in this area resembles that in place in the Central Mediterranean, where public services from Malta and Italy have abandoned rescue efforts, downgrading migrants' right to life.

The Spanish maritime rescue service, Salvamento Marítimo, does not operate below parallel 35° 50', even when lives are in danger and they know Morocco has not launched a rescue operation. We hear of these situations through calls from inflatable rowing boats in the Strait of Gibraltar sharing their exact location. Although they are at high risk of being shipwrecked, several hours often go by before any rescue operation begins.

"I found her at Mohammed V hospital and she's in a very bad way. I'll put her on", says N., one of the migrant community liaison agents we work with in our network.

"Madam, my baby drowned! He drowned", exclaims A., choking on her words. She sobs for a long while before continuing: ***"We were in the dinghy, I was with my baby and the others were neighbourhood friends. They had spent hours calling for someone to rescue us, but nobody came. Then, one of them said we should try and get back to land. The wind was carrying us, too, and the waves sent us up and down. We were almost there when we tipped over. My boy was still tied to me. I am a swimmer. I used to swim in my country, so that's what I did. I swam and I made it. My baby was dead. Dead. The gendarmerie brought me to hospital and my baby is in the morgue. I want to get out of here and bury him."*** A. was able to bury her son in Tangier after surviving the shipwreck on 20 May. There is no news of her five fellow passengers. She is trying to be strong but she continues to have nightmares and anxiety attacks. A. explained that they had been calling the rescue services for help from 11 am to 6 pm. After that, the communication was cut off and it was pitch-black when they tried to turn back.

Our Observatory's monitoring has revealed that Spain cannot venture below the 35° 50' mark to save lives, yet Morocco can cross the line to conduct migration control operations.

"We were calling and sending our position the whole time. We were terrified because the inflatable boat was very deflated. We had done a lot of rowing."

One man fell into the water and we managed to pull him back in. Finally, the Moroccan navy came and, well, at least we are alive. This inflatable rowing boat, which was adrift and sinking with five people on board, was rescued by the Moroccan navy at 35° 55' on 30 August.

In the Mediterranean, it is hard enough to activate migrant search operations even when coordinates are provided, so when an exact position is not given, the operation depends entirely on the 'policy' applied at each Salvamento Marítimo control tower.

"We received a call on the night of 27 August from two Yemeni men who had set off from Nador in a rowing boat. We informed the Spanish and Moroccan rescue services. Spain said they were too close to Morocco and Morocco simply said they would take note of the information. They spent hours sending their position. They were desperate because they could not get back to shore by themselves and no rescue services were coming from Nador or Melilla. The telephone's battery ran out. On 30 August, the Spanish and Moroccan rescue services informed us that they had no idea what had happened to them."

If the warning comes in after several days, no searches are activated despite families' efforts, even if they report it to the police. Questioning the veracity of warnings from organisations, families, migrants and communities is another form of border violence, as is the uncertainty they are put through as they wait.

On 2 December, members of the No Name Kitchen organisation reported the disappearance of five minors who had set off from Ceuta in a raft with no engine on 30 November in the hope of making it to the mainland. Friends said that the teenagers had embarked on Playa de Benítez beach in the Spanish city of Ceuta.

The organisation reported the occurrence to the Civil Guard, explaining that three of the boat's occupants had been tutored at a centre for minors in the city. They also informed Salvamento Marítimo and the Moroccan authorities of the situation.

The minors' families filed a report in Morocco.

The first response from Salvamento Marítimo was that they had to inform the Red Cross of the disappearance. The following day, Salvamento Marítimo offered several theories to No Name Kitchen, including that the minors could have reached the Al Hoceima area or that they may not have set off at all, but at no point did they mention that search operations to find the minors had begun.

*No Name Kitchen continue to support their families and friends, maintaining contact with organisations in Morocco and Spain and searching hospitals and centres for minors. The teenagers are still missing to this day. As the women from No Name Kitchen said, **"it turns out that living and your life mattering is also a privilege"**.*

Boats at Estrecho and Alborán		
VICTIMS	REASONS FOR EXPULSION FROM THEIR COUNTRIES	TRAGIC INCIDENTS
Moroccans and Migrants transiting through Morocco from Guinea Conakry, Senegal, Mali, Cameroon, Siria and Yemen.	<p>Armed conflict.</p> <p>Impoverishment aggravated by climate change.</p> <p>Impoverishment aggravated by COVID-19.</p> <p>Extractivism by companies.</p>	27

ALGERIA: ATTEMPTED CROSSINGS AND DELAYED RESCUE OPERATIONS

Departures from Algeria have been on the rise since 2019 due to social conflict in the country, where people are demanding more democratic standards and access to social rights. Most of the boats carry young Algerians and whole families of people impoverished by the pandemic and corruption.

Most of these vessels choose not to inform of their departure for fear of political repression and the expulsion agreements in place between Spain and Algeria, and their families tend to report their disappearance only after a considerable time without news of their arrival.

At 2 am on 29 October, a fibre boat set off from Mostaganem with 14 people on board. They were all young men, the youngest of whom was 16 years old. According to their families, they were heading to the Spanish coast between Cartagena and Almeria. Our group was informed on 8 November after several days had gone by, and time is of the essence when searching for people at sea.

Boats from Algeria arrive in a very broad area, ranging from Almeria, Murcia and the eastern coast of Spain to the Balearic Islands. This requires coordinated decisions by various rescue control towers and makes it very difficult to activate search efforts. When called, Salvamento Marítimo simply refers our association and the families to either social organisations or the police, despite neither being able to conduct searches at sea.

On 19 September, we informed Salvamento Marítimo in the Balearic Islands that a vessel had gone missing with 14 people on board, eight from sub-Saharan Africa and six Algerians, who had ventured into the Mediterranean on the 17th. We provided the data, but we were told to call the Red Cross because there were too many vessels. Much to our surprise, they gave us a Red Cross customer care

number. We desperately called several control towers until the one in Almeria agreed to at least take the warning. The families continued to call several months later and told us that the people on the boat were still missing.

Boats from Argel- Orán		
VICTIMS	REASONS FOR EXPULSION FROM THEIR COUNTRIES	TRAGIC INCIDENTS
<p>Mostly young Algerians.</p> <p>A small percentage of people transiting through Algeria from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Irak and Palestine.</p>	<p>Impoverishment aggravated by COVID-19.</p> <p>The struggle for access to social rights.</p> <p>The struggle for democratic standards.</p> <p>The battle against corruption.</p> <p>Armed conflict.</p> <p>Impoverishment aggravated by climate change.</p> <p>Extractivism by companies.</p>	<p>19</p>

IMPACT OF BORDER CONTROL POLICIES ON DETRIMENTAL OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE

The monitoring work performed by our Observatory of Human Rights on the Western Euro African Border has revealed a series of factors contributing to tragic incidents at sea:

- More hazardous routes involving longer journeys in poorer geographical conditions.
- Boats departing in poor condition. These boats have always been at risk the moment they enter the sea as they are not seaworthy, but the vessels we have been seeing over the past 12 months are even more damaged, with materials in poor condition, faulty engines and excessive loads.
- People in poor health prior to departure due to long waits in harsh, unhealthy conditions.
- A complete lack of sailing experience among those travelling on the boats, causing them to lose their way easily.
- A lack of coordination between the various countries involved in safeguarding the lives of migrants.
- Scarce resources for rescue.
- Cutbacks in material and human resources for maritime rescue services.
- Unnecessary delays in rescue times.
- Refusal to activate search and rescue operations. Arbitrary decision-making regarding the launch of these services.
- Lack of rescue resources and experience in countries such as Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal.
- Other vessels at sea refusing to help for fear of being prosecuted by the authorities or accused of human trafficking.



REVICTIMISATION: A NEVER-ENDING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Border victims and their families suffer repeated violations of their rights over time.

During our monitoring, we came across cases of survivors who had faced expulsion or forced displacement after experiencing terrible tragedy. In Spain, shipwreck survivors are dealt with under immigration regulations rather than assisted as victims of multiple tragedies.

The authorities' actions are not geared towards providing psychosocial support for victims and their families. No protocols are activated to identify the bodies found or document the identities of those who go missing. Instead, all efforts focus on erasing the victims' existence and rights, even after death, with constant administrative impediments placed upon the families fighting for their rights.

"I can't believe it... Please, keep investigating", says M., unable to believe that the body of his two-year-old daughter has been buried 24 hours after being found on a beach in Morocco. The authorities did not give the families an opportunity to identify their loved ones and give them a dignified burial. The body of the girl's mother never appeared, but he thought he would at least get to say goodbye to his daughter and bury her according to his faith. ***"My wife was pregnant when she came to Morocco from our country and she gave birth to our daughter in Nador. Now they are both dead."*** M. K. and her mother were travelling on a vessel that set off in the early hours of 30 August 30 km north of Dakhla with 86 people on board, including 36 women and 16 minors. On 1 September, the Moroccan navy found the bodies of 21 women and M.'s daughter.

Ten of the bodies had some form of identification on them. Five were from Ivory Coast and five from Guinea-Conakry. The embassies and families were informed, and a migrant organisation came to help identify and repatriate some of the bodies. They were buried on 2 September without informing the families, performing Muslim funeral rituals or praying over their graves. They were buried all together in a pit, far away from the cemeteries, somewhere in the desert.

This case shows the extent to which the authorities disregard the rights of border victims. Families also experience great difficulty identifying their loved ones. The borders are full of obstacles for people in a different country whose right to travel is not acknowledged, particularly if their status has not been formalised.

"Sister, all I want is to bury my little girl. The first thing I considered was leaving and crossing the French border, even though I'm undocumented, but my husband doesn't want to. Plus, I'm about to give birth. I just want to bury my little girl, that's all. To rest. It's her, I know it", says Y.'s mother bitterly. Her daughter was travelling on a boat that set off 60 km south of Dakhla on 17

June with 52 passengers, including 21 women and 12 girls. The boat was found on 30 June by a cargo ship with 36 people on board, one of whom had passed away. Y. died on her way to hospital. Her mother is a resident in France, but she lacks the documentation required to travel and has done everything she can to have her little girl identified and get the chance to bury her. This time, it was the French State that denied the mother the opportunity to travel under threat of deportation, meaning that her informal status prevailed over her rights as a victim's relative.

Identifying the deceased is never a priority in protocols for migrant people. In fact, no action at all is taken to identify the kinship between victims and those crossing by boat. A particularly awful case was made public in April, when a girl agonised alone in hospital as her mother was held at a temporary immigration reception centre. It was a doctor who did everything he could to find her and let her say one last goodbye to her daughter before she died.

Families suffer from a lack of official information, even when they manage to effectively prove their kinship.

"I could not wait in France any longer. I am now in Las Palmas. I came across a man from Togo at the airport in Madrid and he is with me. As soon as I landed, I heard that my daughter was in hospital and my wife had died. I have come to the hospital but they won't let me see her. I have shown them my papers", says K. desperately.

His wife and daughter had left on 16 October on a boat carrying 61 passengers, including 27 women and 12 children. A cargo ship found the vessel on the 24th. Sixteen-year-old A. was taken to hospital where her father was finally able to reunite with her.

"When she saw me, she started jumping for joy and talking. She doesn't want me to leave. She cries if I step out for a moment and I don't want to be away from her either. I want her to get better so I can take her to France with me. I have already let the family know about her mother's death. We need to go through the whole mourning process, but I want to wait until my girl is relaxed with me. I have to wait until the children's services give her back to me and it seems that they could take some time, but they must understand that I am not working and I need to be with my daughter, to get my life back", explained K. resignedly when we met him for coffee in Las Palmas. While he was happy to have got his daughter back and visited her every day at the children's centre, longing to be with her again, he was also pained by his wife's passing. He mentioned the importance of knowing what had happened to allow his wounds to heal.

K. went back to France with his daughter in late November.

This report is intended to honour the memory of the 4.404 victims who lost their lives on the Western Euro African Border in 2021.

It is dedicated to the bravery of migrant communities and relatives of the dead and missing.

May the pain conveyed in these pages be transformed into justice and respect for life
