



Monitoring the
Right To Life
on the Western Euro-African Border

January - May 2026

#RightToLife2026

CA **MINANDO**
FRONTERAS

The results provided in this report are obtained through the investigation and analysis of 150 documented tragedies on the different routes of the Western Euro-African Border, within the framework of the Human Rights Observatory that Caminando Fronteras maintains in this border context. Our analysis systems come from primary sources using a participatory action research methodology.

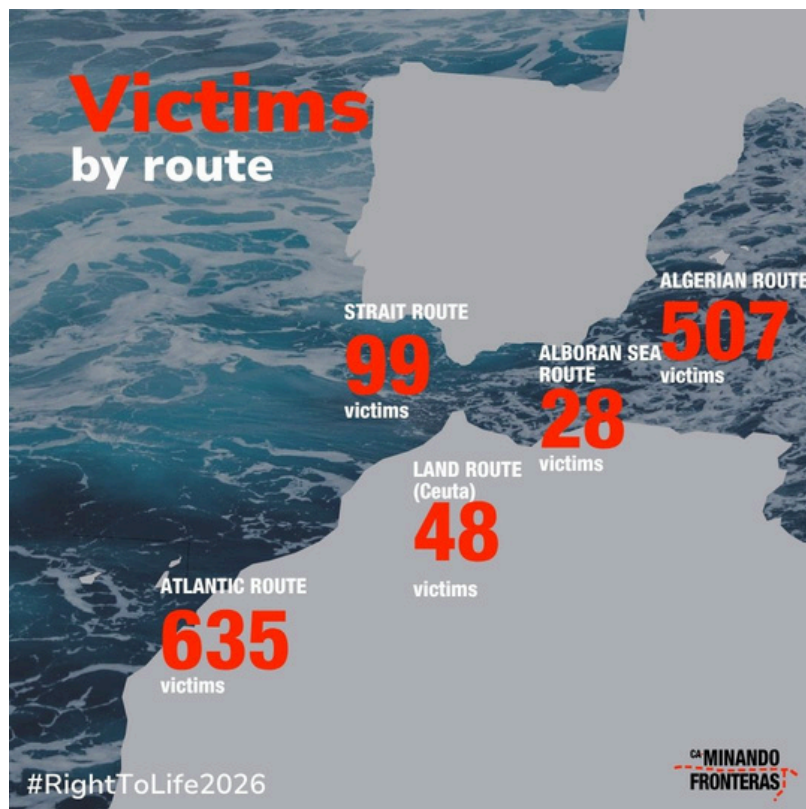
For 24 years, Caminando Fronteras has carried out continuous and uninterrupted monitoring of human rights violations at the border, with special attention to the protection of life. The organisation operates two permanent helplines, available around the clock without interruption: one for assisting people at risk during border crossings, and another for supporting the families of victims. Through these channels, the organisation receives alerts which it reports to the competent public authorities, and systematically documents violations of the right to life arising from these situations.

During the period analysed, absolute mortality increased on all migratory routes of access to the Spanish State compared to the previous year, with the sole exception of the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands. The Algerian route in the western Mediterranean has the highest number of maritime tragedies, and is second in total number of victims after the Atlantic route. Particular attention should be paid to the number of victims on the land route, all concentrated at the Ceuta fence — a route that had recorded no deaths during the same period of the previous year.

The five months documented in this report show figures that no democracy should be able to accept as normal. The reduction in arrivals announced by the authorities this year cannot therefore be interpreted as a success indicator for the protection of human life. They are an example of policies that have chosen to measure their results by preventing people from reaching their territory, ignoring those who do not survive. This document is, above all, an act of memory. It is born from the right of families to know, from the right of victims to be recognised, and from the conviction that memory is also a form of justice. It is a tool for reparation and social transformation, sustained year after year by those who refuse to let victims disappear in silence.

Our thoughts remain with each and every one of the 1,317 victims documented during these first five months of the year. To their families, our deepest and most heartfelt condolences. Truth, reparation and justice, until non-repetition ceases to be an aspiration we fight for and becomes a reality.





27
boats
have disappeared
with everyone on board

#RightToLife2026

CA MINANDO
FRONTERAS

This infographic features a background of dark blue ocean waves. The number '27' is prominently displayed in a large, bold, red font. Below it, the word 'boats' is in a white, bold font. The text 'have disappeared with everyone on board' is in a smaller white font. In the bottom left corner, the hashtag '#RightToLife2026' is visible. In the bottom right corner, the logo for 'CA MINANDO FRONTERAS' is present, consisting of the text 'CA MINANDO' above 'FRONTERAS' with a red dashed line graphic.

People from **26** countries
have died attempting to reach
Spanish coasts

Afghanistan
Algeria
Bangladesh
Burkina Faso
Cameroon
Chad
Dem. Rep. Congo
Ivory Coast
Egypt
Ethiopia
Gabon
Gambia
Guinea Bissau
Guinea Conakry
Comoros Islands
Mali
Malawi
Morocco
Mauritania
Nigeria
Pakistan
Somalia
Senegal
Sudan
South Sudan
Tunisia

#RightToLife2026

CA MINANDO
FRONTERAS

This infographic features a map of the African continent and parts of the Middle East, with red location pins indicating the countries of origin for 26 people who died attempting to reach Spanish coasts. The text 'People from 26 countries have died attempting to reach Spanish coasts' is displayed in white. A list of 26 countries is provided in two columns: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Dem. Rep. Congo, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Comoros Islands, Mali, Malawi, Morocco, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Senegal, Sudan, South Sudan, and Tunisia. In the bottom left corner, the hashtag '#RightToLife2026' is visible. In the bottom right corner, the logo for 'CA MINANDO FRONTERAS' is present.

Account of tragedies by route

ALGERIAN ROUTE IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN



The Algerian route has the highest number of tragedies in the period analysed and for the first time exceeds 500 documented victims in five months, 54.6% more than in the same period of the previous year. A figure that means that every seven hours a person loses their life on this border.

Since 2025, there has been continuation of a recurring pattern: the discovery of people who have died along the coast, many of them in a state that indicates a recent drowning.

Their appearance on the coastline suggests that several of the shipwrecks took place in areas relatively close to the Balearic Islands, which highlights the need for an investigation to improve location systems and strengthen effective protection of the right to life.

Regarding the data presented in this report, the most concerning factor identified remains the inadequacy of the response to the alerts issued, which continues to be irregular and delayed. The absence of joint operational protocols with Algeria aggravates this situation, creating an institutional vacuum that condemns multiple cases of disappearance to remain without search and investigation.

Account of tragedies by route

ATLANTIC ROUTE TO THE CANARY ISLANDS



In terms of absolute number of victims, the Canary Islands route, with 635, remains the deadliest on the Western Euro-African Border. Despite the significant reduction in transit on this route recorded during this period, the analysis developed in this report has identified factors that were working against the protection of the right to life.

While arrivals to the islands have fallen by 72.1%, deaths have decreased by 57.2%. The gap between these two figures is evidence that the route has become proportionally more lethal. For every 100 people who managed to arrive in 2025, around 14 died. In 2026, that figure rises to 21 people.

Throughout the period analysed, a relevant change has been observed in the composition and origin of flows. The first months saw a majority of cayucos departing from Gambia, associated with large-scale shipwrecks and a high number of disappearances at sea. During the months of March, April and May, there was a reactivation of inflatable boats departing from the coastal strip between Agadir and Dakhla. A progressive displacement of departure points towards more distant areas has been documented, with boats departing from Essaouira, significantly increasing the distance and risk for those on board.

The systematic deployment of aerial search assets could significantly reduce mortality. In this regard, disputes over the delimitation of SAR zones between Spain and Morocco have been identified as the main factor causing delays in rescues, with documented lethal consequences. Effective coordination between the two countries would shorten response times in emergencies and strengthen the protection of the right to life of those travelling on this route.

Account of tragedies by route

STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR ROUTE



Victims on the Strait of Gibraltar route almost doubled, rising from 52 to 99, an increase of 90.4%.

Swimming to Ceuta remains the most frequent method of crossing on this route. During the first months of the year, arrivals in conditions of extreme weather have been persistently recorded, significantly increasing the vulnerability of people and the risk of death. This period has also seen an increase in rowing boats, whose extreme fragility makes them manifestly unsafe for a sea crossing.

The recovery of deceased persons is relatively frequent on this route, but the identification of victims faces administrative obstacles which, in the case of Moroccan nationals, have been compounded by the closure of the border. The absence of effective mechanisms for cooperation with Morocco that would facilitate humanitarian channels for families causes irreparable harm. The situation is further aggravated in the case of people from other countries, such as Sudan, Egypt or Mali, where identification is practically impossible without international cooperation coordinated through embassies — a channel that in most cases does not exist or functions inadequately.

Particularly noteworthy is the increase in deaths in one of the border areas with the smallest extent and an enormous presence of control devices, which demonstrates that surveillance is far more oriented towards preventing arrivals than towards protecting life.

Account of tragedies by route

ALBORAN SEA ROUTE



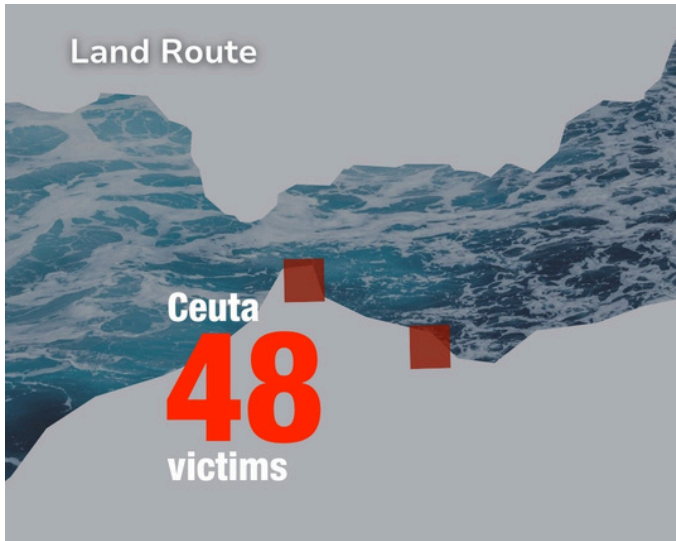
The Alboran Sea route has the lowest volume of documented cases of all the routes analysed, although the available data reflects an increase in both the number of victims and tragedies compared to the previous period. 3 victims were recorded in 2025, while during the same period this year 7 tragedies have been documented resulting in 28 deaths.

The tragedies analysed correspond to people who attempted to swim to Melilla and to shipwrecks of inflatable boats on crossings towards the Andalusian coast.

Once again, the almost systematic absence of early search and rescue mechanisms leaves these people exposed to situations in which their lives are left unprotected.

Account of tragedies by route

LAND ROUTE



This report has counted and investigated the deaths of 48 people at the Ceuta fence during the first 5 months of 2026. The deaths were caused by falls from the fence and violence exerted by border control agents. It is worth noting that some of the victims suffered summary returns despite having serious injuries, which ultimately proved fatal.

It is necessary to underline the historical dimension of this figure. Since the Nador–Melilla massacre in 2022, such a high number of victims had not been recorded in the land areas of the Western Euro-African Border. These deaths are a warning sign regarding the level of violence to which people in transit are exposed in this border space, and the absence of effective mechanisms to protect their fundamental rights.

FACTORS IDENTIFIED AS CONTRIBUTING TO MORTALITY ON MIGRATORY ROUTES

Absence of mobilisation of search and rescue resources: even when sufficient information was available to act, assets were not activated or those deployed were manifestly insufficient.

Selective and discriminatory application of maritime safety standards: rescue services adopt a restrictive interpretation regarding boats carrying migrants, considering that there is no real urgency for rescue, even when the boats do not meet the minimum conditions for seaworthiness.

Discretionary criteria for determining when and how to deploy rescue assets: this introduces considerable arbitrariness in the institutional response and reveals a lack of transparency in the implementation of current procedures.

Uneven application of protection protocols depending on the territory: the criteria differ according to the route on the Western Euro-African Border, generating discrimination in terms of the human rights of migrants.

Failure to intervene despite knowing the exact location of shipwrecks: situations have been recorded in which, with alert data available and a manifest risk identified, protocols for protecting life were not applied.

Replacement of active search with passive methods of low effectiveness: which considerably reduces the possibilities of location and rescue.

Insufficient mobilisation of aerial and maritime resources: which limits response capacity in emergencies at sea. The low activation of aerial resources is particularly concerning because they provide great effectiveness in location.

Insufficient coordination between states: with cooperation mechanisms that are not based on humanitarian principles, but on bilateral agreements aimed at containing migratory flows.

Considerable delays in launching coordinated rescue operations: attributable at times to administrative obstacles or decisions of a diplomatic and political nature arising from border externalisation agreements.

Use of violence at departure checkpoints: both by criminal networks and by security forces, placing people in danger from the very start of the crossing.

Use of violence on board the boat: panic situations have led to confrontations resulting in death.

Extreme physical conditions and adverse weather: including severe meteorological events and long distances to be covered without sufficient means to ensure safety.

Serious precariousness of the boats used: which do not meet the minimum required nautical safety standards.

A report by:



With the support of:



This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and the 2030 Agenda. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the grant recipient and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and the 2030 Agenda.