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### MIGRANTS SPAIN MOROCCO BORDER CROSSING

People in Ceuta, Spain, walk toward the country's border with Morocco July 31, 2026, leaving Spain amid mass crossings of migrants on foot and by sea from Morocco into Spanish territory. (OSV News/Reuters/Jon Nazca)

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Catholic bishops and church charity officials in Spain this week condemned the politicizing of an immigration crisis after tens of thousands of migrants recently crossed the border from Morocco to the Spanish city of Ceuta in North Africa.

“Biopolitics is key to current global power. Life is toyed with, and people — their dreams, hunger, sexuality, and data — are exploited for the sake of profit and power,” Archbishop Luis Argüello of Valladolid, president of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, wrote in Spanish in an Aug. 2 [post](#) on X.

He described the “invasion of Ceuta” as a “test,” where “demography is a weapon.”

A similar warning came from Bishop Xabier Gómez García, the Spanish bishops' point person on migration and intercultural ministry in Catalonia, Spain. In a statement, he criticized "those who use human mobility as an instrument of political pressure" and "hybrid threats."

These statements came amid [mounting questions](#) from politicians and lawmakers over whether Morocco failed to enforce appropriate border controls to pressure Spain and the European Union. The regional president of Ceuta, Juan Jesús Vivas, claimed that residents believe the influx was "if not orchestrated, at least encouraged or permitted by Morocco." Meanwhile, European Commissioner for Migration Magnus Brunner said the events at Ceuta highlight the fragility of Europe's border patrol when it relies too heavily on neighboring countries.

Morocco has [denied responsibility](#), and no public evidence has established that the country orchestrated the influx.

Spain has had a welcoming immigration policy compared to other EU nations and in June gave over 1 million undocumented immigrants a one-year renewable work and residence permit. Some news reports suggest that widely shared [social media posts](#) announced that the border was open and they would be welcomed in Spain.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez [said](#) he views the events at Ceuta as a "violation of Spain's territorial integrity." He accused human trafficking networks of encouraging people to make the crossing and thanked Morocco for its cooperation. Italy reintroduced border checks on arrivals from Spain, while Finland and Denmark called for Spain's temporary suspension from the Schengen free-movement area. Twenty-two of the EU's 27 countries signed a letter calling for an emergency meeting following the Ceuta crisis.

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Caritas Spain, the Catholic Church's charitable organization, backed the bishops' assessment and issued a more explicit warning about the geopolitical use of migration.

"We condemn the use of migrants as tools in the service of political or strategic interests and the use of demographic pressure as a geopolitical weapon," said Sònia Martínez Albiñana, a Caritas lawyer specializing in migrants' rights, asylum and

access to government services, in a written responses to Religion News Service.

Caritas urged the international community and political leaders “to promote solutions based on protecting human rights, cooperation among countries and within the European Union, respect for the law and the establishment of safe pathways for migration,” she wrote.

Martínez Albiñana noted that “the international conditions needed to make that possible do not exist.”

She mentioned that the legal frameworks in Europe for providing safe and legal pathways for migrants in need of protection “are inadequate.” The recent European Pact on Migration and Asylum, which speeds up asylum screening and returns while requiring member states to share responsibility for migrants, risks compromising international forms of protection, she added.

The majority of the estimated 70,000 immigrants crossing the border from Morocco to Ceuta were young men, entering through border gates and crossing on foot and by swimming around the coastal barriers. But there were also a sizable number of women and children as well as immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, according to Caritas.

The influx, which includes about 1,100 unaccompanied minors, overwhelmed the small Northern African city of roughly 85,000 residents.

“We are particularly concerned about unaccompanied children,” Martínez Albiñana said, adding that Caritas has prioritized providing “basic care, accompaniment, guidance, a listening ear” to migrants. She added that the local dioceses donated the Sunday collections from all its parishes to the diocesan migration office to help care for and receive people affected by the crisis.

Approximately 100 people died during the mass crossing, according to Vivas, who also said less than 5,000 migrants remain in Ceuta after most returned to Morocco.

Martínez Albiñana said that while Caritas has no concrete data or evidence showing that rights have been violated, she warned that legal safeguards are at risk under current chaotic conditions in Ceuta.

Pope Leo XIV visited Spain in June, where he stressed the importance of welcoming and promoting immigrants while understanding the challenges migration poses to

nations. He issued an appeal on Sunday (Aug. 2) to seek common solutions.

"I am following with concern the alarming situation in Ceuta," he said, asking that "solutions may be found to bring peace, stability and justice."