



TEXTS ADOPTED

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The recent hybrid attacks and instrumentalisation of migrants in Ceuta and the need for a coordinated response to protect EU's external borders

European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2026 on the recent hybrid attacks and instrumentalisation of migrants in Ceuta and the need for a coordinated response to protect the EU's external borders (2026/2870(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular their provisions on the area of freedom, security and justice,
- having regard to the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951, and the additional protocol thereto,
- having regard to the Treaty between the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Hellenic Republic, the French Republic, Ireland, the Italian Republic, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Member States of the European Communities) and the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic concerning the accession of the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic to the European Economic Community and to the European Atomic Energy Community, signed on 12 June 1985¹,
- having regard to the Pact for the Mediterranean launched jointly by the EU, its Member States and southern Mediterranean partners in November 2025,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989, in particular Articles 3 and 18 and the principle of

¹ OJ L 302, 15.11.1985, p. 9, ELI:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/acc_1985/sign.

the best interests of the child,

- having regard to the legislative instruments comprising the Pact on Migration and Asylum, which entered into application on 12 June 2026,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code)²,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to Council Decision 2006/688/EC of 5 October 2006 on the establishment of a mutual information mechanism concerning Member States' measures in the areas of asylum and immigration³,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2026/464 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 February 2026 amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level⁴, which establishes Morocco as a safe country of origin,
- having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part⁵, which entered into force in 2000,
- having regard to the Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the Kingdom of Morocco on cooperation in the field of prevention of illegal emigration of unaccompanied minors, their protection and their concerted return, which was signed in Rabat on 6 March 2007 and entered into force on 2 October 2012,
- having regard to the European Court of Human Rights judgment of 13 February 2020 in the case of *N.D. and N.T. v Spain* (8675/15 and 8697/15),
- having regard to the Chişinău Declaration of 15 May 2026 and the commitments undertaken therein by participating states,

² OJ L 77, 23.3.2016, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/399/oj>.

³ OJ L 283, 14.10.2006, p. 40, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2006/688/oj>.

⁴ OJ L, 2026/464, 26.2.2026, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2026/464/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 70, 18.3.2000, p. 2, ELI:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2000/204/oj.

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Morocco, in particular its resolution of 10 June 2021 on the breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the use of minors by the Moroccan authorities in the migratory crisis in Ceuta⁶ and its non-legislative resolution of 16 January 2019 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco on the amendment of Protocols 1 and 4 to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part⁷,
 - having regard to the letter signed by 22 heads of state and government on 1 August 2026 and sent to President of the European Council António Costa, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, and Taoiseach Micheál Martin,
 - having regard to the statements by the Council and the Commission of 15 September 2026 on the recent hybrid attacks and instrumentalisation of migrants in Ceuta and the need for a coordinated response to protect EU's external borders,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Ceuta and Melilla constitute a singular example of coexistence, being two Spanish cities in which Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu communities have coexisted for generations, sharing public space, cultural traditions and civic life, united by a common commitment to the rule of law, equal rights and the values that underpin the European project;
 - B. whereas international law and the principle of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of state borders must be respected;
 - C. whereas any attempt to undermine or put pressure on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a Member State, including through the weaponisation of migration by non-EU countries or other hostile international actors, constitutes a hybrid threat to the security and stability of the EU and its Member States and requires a response that goes beyond the instruments designed for addressing ordinary migratory flows;
 - D. whereas between 29 and 31 July 2026, approximately 80 000 migrants crossed irregularly into Ceuta from Morocco, by land and sea, and several hundred crossed into Melilla; whereas at least 141 people died during the crossing; whereas up to 11 000 irregular migrants refused to return to Morocco and remain in Ceuta; whereas the exact number of deaths and crossings and the identities of those

⁶ OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 99.

⁷ OJ C 411, 27.11.2020, p. 292.

remaining are still unknown;

- E. whereas the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children; whereas unaccompanied children may face heightened risks of trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, disappearance and re-victimisation; whereas girls, younger children and children who have experienced violence may have specific protection and care needs;
- F. whereas special attention should be given to the protection needs of women, children and other vulnerable persons, including measures to prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation;
- G. whereas Ceuta, with a resident population of approximately 84 500, has been invaded and has seen its reception facilities, health services and infrastructure brought close to collapse; whereas evidence on the ground, including statements from the Spanish Public Prosecutor's Office, indicates that sexual violence has risen, including forced prostitution of migrant children; whereas normal life has not resumed, residents, workers and businesses continue to suffer lasting consequences, public order and security remain at risk, and children are returning to school under armed escort, demonstrating that the situation remains far from resolved;
- H. whereas repeated warnings from local authorities and security and intelligence services had been conveyed to the Spanish Government, as per the confidential reports disclosed on 9 September 2026, indicating that pressure at the border had been building well before those days; whereas during the crisis, the Assembly of Ceuta unanimously called on the national government to close the border, declare a national emergency, convene the National Security Council, appoint a single coordinating authority and deploy the armed forces; whereas the Spanish Government failed to act on those calls;
- I. whereas on 1 August 2026, 22 heads of state and government signed a joint letter calling for an immediate and coordinated European response; whereas, in the letter, the heads of state and government linked the crisis to the Spanish Government's mass regularisation of over one million irregular migrants and stressed that illegal entry must never turn into legal stay; whereas the letter also called for enhanced Frontex support and effective cooperation with Morocco on returns;
- J. whereas on 4 August 2026, home affairs ministers of the Member States expressed solidarity with Spain and stressed the need to reinforce returns, external borders, third-country cooperation and early-warning systems; whereas the Spanish Ministers for Home

Affairs, Grande-Marlaska, and for Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, Saiz, declined to attend the extraordinary meeting of Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of 6 August 2026;

- K. whereas on 24 August 2026, Spain requested over EUR 32 million in emergency financial support through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Border Management and Visa Policy Instrument, but only formally requested reinforced support from Frontex, Europol and the EU Agency for Asylum on 28 August 2026, almost a month after the crisis began and despite numerous offers from the Commission;
 - L. whereas the Chişinău Declaration, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 15 May 2026, recognises instrumentalisation of migration as a contemporary threat to territorial integrity and national security, and affirms the sovereign right of states to protect their borders and pursue new approaches to deter irregular migration;
 - M. whereas on 7 September 2026, the Spanish high court Audiencia Nacional assumed responsibility for the judicial investigation into the mass entry of migrants into Ceuta on the grounds that the events may constitute a serious attack on Spain's territorial integrity;
 - N. whereas on 9 September 2026, the Commission granted Spain EUR 114,7 million in emergency financial support to help manage the crisis;
- 1. Pays tribute to and expresses full support for the people of Ceuta and Melilla, who have long embodied a living example of coexistence between people of different cultures, origins and religions; stresses that this coexistence is not merely a social reality but a daily affirmation of the rule of law, equal rights and the common values that lie at the heart of the European project;
 - 2. Expresses its deep regret and sorrow for the 141 people who died at sea during the events of 30 and 31 July 2026;
 - 3. Expresses its full solidarity with the citizens and local authorities of Ceuta, who have faced and continue to face an unprecedented crisis with remarkable responsibility, calm and resilience; reiterates that Ceuta and Melilla are Spanish and European cities whose sovereignty and territorial integrity are beyond question;
 - 4. Condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the mass illegal crossings into Ceuta from Morocco, by land and by sea, and the instrumentalisation of irregular migration as a tool of hybrid warfare against the territorial integrity of a Member State; considers it of the utmost priority to strengthen the protection of the EU's external land and maritime borders in Ceuta;

5. Regrets the loss of life that occurred during the illegal crossing; recalls that these deaths could have been prevented had the necessary measures been taken on both sides to stop the illegal crossing before it took place;
6. Calls on the Spanish and Moroccan authorities, with the support of the Commission, to ensure the identification of all those who died during the crossing, the dignified treatment and repatriation of their remains, and the notification of and support for their families; calls for a full and transparent investigation into the circumstances of each death;
7. Restates its firm support for multilateralism and the rules-based international order, noting that any attempt to undermine the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of any Member State violates international law and the UN Charter;
8. Calls on the Spanish Government to urgently deploy all necessary measures to restore normality in Ceuta, including adequate security and economic support for affected businesses, workers and residents;
9. Expresses serious concern at the large-scale regularisation policy pursued by the Government of President Pedro Sánchez, which acts as a pull factor and sends the wrong signal to potential migrants and criminal smuggling networks; stresses that illegal entry must never become a shortcut to legal residence;
10. Calls on the Commission to assess, in cooperation with the Member States, the possible cross-border impact of national mass regularisation schemes on secondary movements and the functioning and security of the Schengen area;
11. Commends the work of the Policia Nacional, the Guardia Civil, the Spanish Armed Forces, the Spanish Red Cross, Caritas, non-governmental organisations, and other civil society organisations involved in the response to the crisis, often under exceptionally difficult circumstances;
12. Condemns the acts of violence that have been recorded in Ceuta since the start of the crisis; calls on the Spanish Government to immediately reinforce the presence of police and security forces in the city to restore public order and security, which remain at risk weeks after the mass illegal crossing;
13. Reaffirms that the preservation of the Schengen area requires the EU to ensure the effective protection of its external borders and requires all Member States to fully assume their responsibilities in preventing and combating migrant smuggling;
14. Welcomes the Commission's swift decision to grant Spain

EUR 114,7 million in emergency assistance to help manage the crisis in Ceuta; calls on the Spanish Government to make full and effective use of these funds, as well as the material resources and operational support from EU agencies offered by the Commission, to restore normality, improve conditions and accelerate returns;

15. Takes note of the decision of the Spanish national high court, the Audiencia Nacional, to assume jurisdiction over the judicial investigation into the mass illegal crossing on the grounds that it may constitute a serious attack on Spain's territorial integrity; calls on the Spanish Government to fully cooperate with and support the ongoing investigation;
16. Endorses the assertion by 22 heads of state and government that uncontrolled mass crossings and the instrumentalisation of migration must never create the perception that illegal entry into the European Union can turn into legal stay; warns that such a perception encourages further attempts and undermines confidence in the EU's common migration policy; recalls, in this regard, that national policies such as mass regularisation cannot be adopted without regard for their impact on other Member States, the Schengen Area and the EU as a whole;
17. Recalls that protecting the EU's external borders is a shared responsibility between the Member States and that any failure to act decisively undermines the integrity of the Schengen Area as a whole; recognises the efforts made by countries targeted by instrumentalised migration, including Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Greece and Poland, and their determination in protecting the EU's external borders; calls on the Commission and all Member States to step up their efforts, increase funding, including for external border protection infrastructure, enhance Frontex's capabilities and ensure that all instruments are swiftly deployable in situations of crisis, hybrid threats or instrumentalisation;
18. Recalls that the Pact on Migration and Asylum has been fully applicable since 12 June 2026 and underlines Spain's responsibility to make full and effective use of the Pact's legal and operational framework, including screening, border asylum and return procedures; calls, furthermore, for strengthened cooperation with countries of origin and transit to ensure effective migration management;
19. Recognises that a large number of unaccompanied children are still in Ceuta; stresses that the Spanish authorities must ensure the protection and appropriate care of unaccompanied minors; calls on the Spanish authorities to carry out individual assessments of their circumstances and needs without delay, with the minors' best interests as a primary consideration, in accordance with EU law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

20. Stresses the urgent need to ensure the swift and effective return of all those who have no right to remain in the EU, including unaccompanied minors, in full compliance with EU and international law; urges Spain and Morocco to accelerate their cooperation on returns and readmission of all irregular migrants who arrived during the mass illegal crossing of 29-31 July 2026;
21. Stresses that EU relations with neighbouring non-EU countries must be based on reciprocity and effective cooperation; considers that preferential access to the EU market, EU financing and strategic cooperation should be conditional on effective cooperation, including with regard to border management, the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking, identification and readmission, and should seek clear and measurable commitments in order to prevent illegal crossings, ensure effective returns and protect the EU's external borders; stresses that such cooperation must be accompanied by full respect for the territorial integrity of the Member States; calls for existing EU partnerships to be used to secure concrete commitments and measurable results;
22. Calls on the Moroccan authorities to fulfil their responsibilities as a key partner of the European Union and honour their commitments on border management, return and migration cooperation; stresses that such partnership must be grounded in unconditional respect for the territorial integrity of EU Member States, as a fundamental principle of international law and a non-negotiable condition; considers any statement calling Spanish sovereignty into question to be unacceptable and incompatible with the obligations of a partner country;
23. Calls for the establishment of a stricter and more transparent framework governing the disbursement and oversight of EU development and cooperation funds to third countries; insists on the introduction of robust mechanisms allowing for the immediate suspension and full recovery of funds in cases of non-cooperation, or where the interests of the EU or the Member States are at stake;
24. Calls on the Government of Spain, with the support of the Council and the Commission, to draw up a proposal setting out the necessary EU regulatory and financial mechanisms required to strengthen the security, stability and development of the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, taking into account the particular circumstances, risks and threats that both cities face;
25. Calls on the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, with the support of the European External Action Service and in cooperation with the relevant Member State authorities, to assess, within their respective competences and on the basis of all available information, including relevant Spanish and EU law-enforcement and

intelligence information, the circumstances surrounding the events of 30 and 31 July 2026, including possible facilitation by or deliberate inaction or involvement of state or non-state actors;

26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of Morocco.