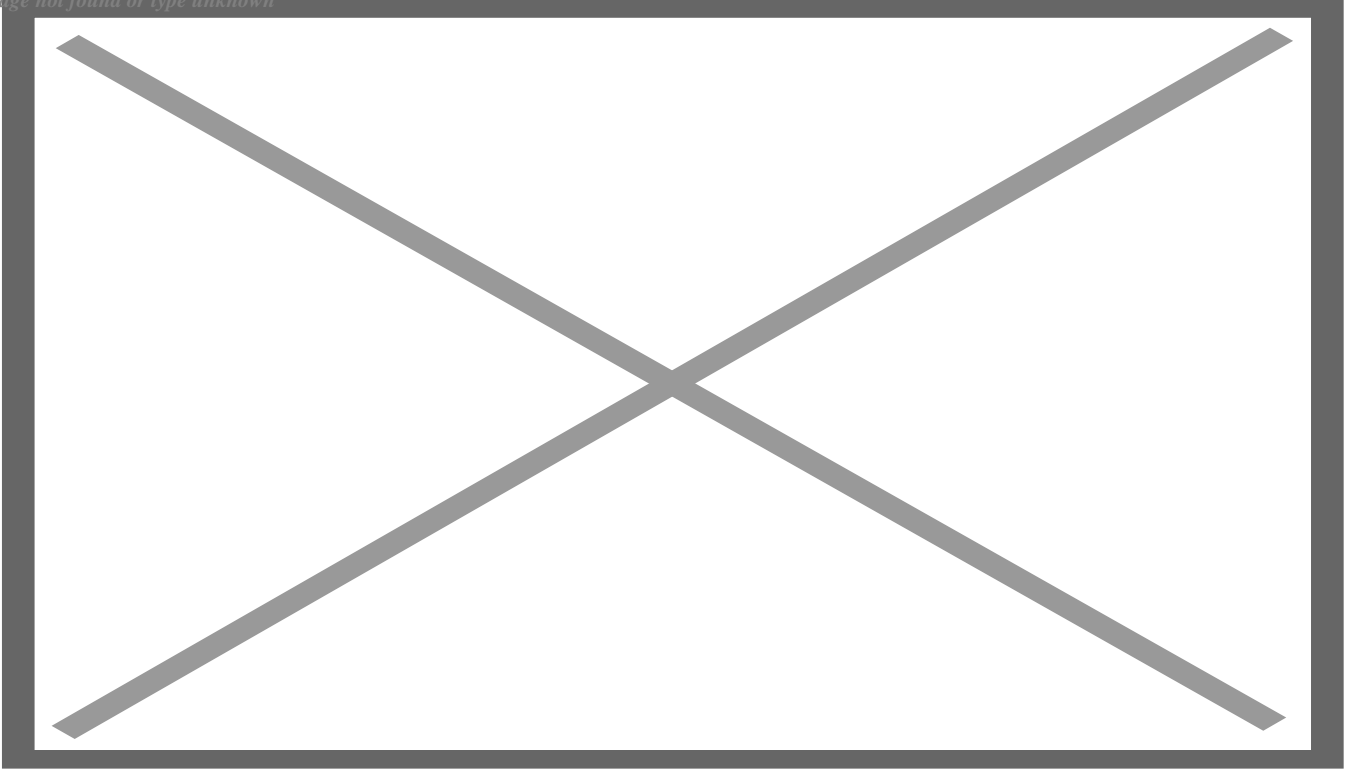


Forbidden Paradise

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African migrants in the Canary Islands

By Guillermo Alvarado

Thousands of people, almost all of African origin, gather in Morocco or the Canary Islands in the hope of being able to enter the Spanish mainland, seek better living conditions or escape violence or the ravages of climate change in their countries.

Any of the routes chosen involves many risks, but they and their families travel driven by needs that go beyond the danger, which is why, despite the obstacles, the number of desperate migrants will grow this year compared to previous years.

According to figures from the Spanish Ministry of the Interior, so far this year some 31 thousand people have arrived in that country irregularly, of which the majority did so from the Canary Islands.

If this trend continues, the number of travellers throughout 2024 will be around 70,000, said the ministry, and that does not include those who are stranded without being able to advance towards their objective or return home.

And it is not precisely that they are welcome if they manage to touch Spanish continental soil, far from it, since that country, like the rest of the European Union, places severe limits on migrants.

Precisely one of the main criticisms that humanitarian organisations make of Madrid is the almost total absence of policies to assist those who arrive in an irregular situation, much less facilitate their integration into society and the labour market.

In Ceuta and Melilla, two Spanish enclaves in North Africa, the authorities have practically fenced off the border with Morocco to prevent passage and both day and night there are personnel on the coasts to stop those who try to reach it by swimming.

In fact, much of the dirty work is done by the Moroccan authorities, especially after they normalised relations with Spain.

What Europe does not understand is that this is not a whim of migrants at all; it is not a pleasure trip, but a journey where the possibility of losing one's life is permanent.

It is known, more or less, how many arrive on that continent, but there is no certain data on those who died overwhelmed in the sands of the desert or who lie at the bottom of the sea after the shipwreck of the weak boats, which are usually loaded beyond their capacity.

Only those who have already lost everything venture out in this way, even knowing that when they arrive, if they arrive, they will be rejected and discriminated against in societies where humanism is not a fashionable value.

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