Spain Discovers Ivorian Boy Smuggled in Suitcase

Madrid, May 13 (RHC)-- An eight-year-old boy was crammed into a suitcase and smuggled across the border from North Africa, Spanish police say. The Ivory Coast boy named Abou was discovered when police at Ceuta, a Spanish enclave next to Morocco, put the roller luggage bag through an X-ray scanner and found the silhouette of a young boy curled up inside the suitcase.

"When they put the suitcase through the scanner, the operator noticed something strange, which seemed to be a person inside the case," a Spanish Civil Guard police spokesperson told AFP. "When it was opened they found a minor, in a terrible state."

The carrier of the suitcase, a 19-year old Moroccan woman, had aroused police suspicion at the land office of El Tarajal by her nervous state that prompted the security forces to scan her suitcase. She was arrested and a few hours later, the boy's father, an Ivorian, was also arrested at the same border crossing.

According to Spanish newspaper El Pais, the Moroccan courier woman was paid by the boy's father to carry the suitcase. "She seemed to hesitate, and it looked as though she didn't want to come through the border," said a police spokesperson.

The boy's father, also named Abou, reportedly lives in Canary Islands and had hoped his son would join him. If the boy had not been spotted, "it could have led to a tragic end," read a statement from the Civil Guard to EFE, a Spanish international news agency.

Each year, thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, who are escaping prosecution and war in their homelands, try to cross from the African country of Morocco into the Spanish territory illegally through the 15-kilometer Strait of Gibraltar.

The migrants embark on the perilous journey using makeshift boats and inflatable dinghies.

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