



## **Deaths at the border of Ceuta**

### **AEDH calls for the launch of a committee of inquiry**

***Brussels, 11 February 2014***

On Thursday, February 6th, at least 15 people died while trying to cross the border between Ceuta and Morocco. This new tragedy reveals, once again, how European policies, and more precisely in this case the policy of the Spanish government, seriously undermine Human rights, and cause the suffering and death of hundreds of people each year.

Over the last few days, the numerous attempts to cross the barriers of Ceuta and Melilla show the desperation of people crossing large parts of Africa in an attempt to reach Europe in order to have a better and more decent life. This also reveals the cruelty and inhumanity of governments who install sharp blades on these barriers in order to intentionally hurt those trying to cross them, and who do not hesitate to use rubber bullets and teargas bombs against migrants still trying to cross the borders. Various sources have indeed denounced the use of rubber bullets against migrants making holes in the buoys they were using to cross the border, thus causing the drowning of several of them.

Moreover, the practice of illegal refoulements of migrants at the border has been irrefutably demonstrated, in Ceuta as well as in Melilla. In violation of the Spanish legislation on foreigners and of the European Directive 2008/115/CE, the Spanish authorities escort migrants to the border with Morocco, without having previously analysed their situation, while many sub-Saharan people trying to cross the border are refugees, asylum seekers, and/or victims of human trafficking.

The Spanish Minister for Internal Affairs, Jorge Fernández Díaz, himself has acknowledged that such procedures took place, "in limited cases". But, he hasn't reached the conclusions, has not taken the necessary measures to put an end to these practices – which happen on a daily basis as documented by video recordings – nor punished the perpetrators or planned to resign.

In light of these dramatic events, the explanations provided by the Spanish government are not only insufficient, but also mutually contradictory and invalidated by testimonies.

As a result, various Spanish NGOs (including APDHA, member of AEDH) have called for the launch of a committee of inquiry by the European Parliament, in order to determine responsibility for the death of these 15 migrants and for the violations of the legislation, but also to recognize the consequences of a migration policy contrary to human rights, particularly when it comes to border controls of Ceuta and Melilla.

AEDH reiterates its refusal of a European migration policy based on the fight against organised crime and terrorism in the strongest possible terms. There is an urgent need to break with this obsessive determination to close borders and of hostility towards foreigners, without taking into consideration humanitarian issues or the respect of the right to asylum. Instead of aiming at ensuring the rights of persons seeking international protection, the right to asylum is derailed by

*Unofficial translation*

the introduction of means of control and criminal repression, so prized in the EU, as evidenced by the sharp blades in Ceuta and Melilla as only most recent examples.

**AEDH fully supports the Spanish associations and demands that light be shed on the actual circumstances of the events in Ceuta and Melilla. With the APDHA, it intends to join their request to the European Parliament to launch a committee of inquiry, and to denounce these facts before international human rights organizations.**

**Contact:**

**Rafael LARA, General Secretary**  
[international@apdha.org](mailto:international@apdha.org)

**AEDH**, Association Européenne pour la défense des Droits de l'Homme  
33, rue de la Caserne. B-1000 Bruxelles  
Tél : +32(0)25112100 Fax : +32(0)25113200  
Email: [info@aedh.eu](mailto:info@aedh.eu)

**The European Association for the Defence of Human Rights** (Association Européenne pour la défense des Droits de l'Homme - AEDH) consists of associations and leagues defending human rights in the countries of the European Union. AEDH is an associate member of the International Federation of Human Rights (Fédération internationale pour la défense des droits de l'Homme - FIDH). For more information, visit [www.aedh.eu](http://www.aedh.eu)