

ATLANTIC ROUTE

Since 2020, around 40,000 people have departed from the Northwest African coast across the Atlantic Ocean to reach Spain's Canary Islands. Faced with protracted displacement, dire conditions in neighbouring host countries, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of viable alternatives, many are attempting this risky sea journey towards the Canary islands.

In the first nine months of 2022, an estimate of 11,231 people arrived in the Canary Islands; an increase of around 27% compared to the same period in 2021 (Spanish Ministry of Interior and UNHCR data). The Atlantic route also remains one of the deadliest migratory routes to Europe. 1,173 persons were recorded dead or missing on the Atlantic route in 2021 (IOM), and casualties didn't stop in 2022.

While no official data is available on the incidence of migrant smuggling along this route, the field research findings show that the majority of those arriving irregularly were smuggled into the Canaries. Also, between January and November 2021, 150 boat drivers were arrested for migrant smuggling.

The bishops of the two dioceses of the Canary Islands spoke of the many migrants and refugees who are trying to reach these islands: "many of these people die in the attempt and our coasts become cemeteries, frustrating dreams and illusions." The two Bishops also published a joint pastoral letter in which they asked the members of consecrated life of the Canary Islands to start «corridors of hospitality» for migrants and refugees: "We cannot remain apart from the pain of our brothers and sisters. The encounter with the other is also an encounter with Christ."

For further information:

Institutional Websites and NGOs

MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR De ESPAÑA, INMIGRACIÓN IRREGULAR 2022

http://www.interior.gob.es/documents/10180/12745481/20_informe_quincenal_acumulado_01-01_al_31-10-2021.pdf/c6f9c76b-2bc0-4b4c-bd1e-4c44d9a82fbf

IOM_DTM, Western African Atlantic Route (January – June 2022)

<https://dtm.iom.int/reports/west-and-central-africa-%E2%80%94-irregular-migration-routes-europe-%E2%80%94-western-african-atlantic-0>

UNHCR, Spain Weekly Snapshot, 11 September 2022

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/86403>

UNODC, Migrant Smuggling from the Northwest African coast to the Canary Islands

https://www.unodc.org/res/som/docs/Observatory_StoryMap_3_NorthWestAfrica.pdf

Online Newspapers and Periodicals:

RELIGION DIGITAL_ Proyecto de 'corredores de hospitalidad' para migrantes

https://www.religiondigital.org/diocesis/Canarias-presentaran-CEE-corredores-hospitalidad-obispos-migrantes-cementerio-oceano-solidaridad_0_2490350942.html

SANT?EGIDIO_ Dying of Hope prayer in Cyprus to remember migrants who died at sea

<https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30284/langID/en/itemID/49885/Dying-of-Hope-prayer-in-Cyprus-to-remember-migrants-who-died-on-their-journeys-at-sea.html>

INFOMIGRANTS_ Canary Islands: More migrants risk deadly Atlantic route

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/39667/canary-islands-more-migrants-risk-deadly-atlantic-route>

INFOMIGRANTS_ Survivor's account of capsized boat in Mediterranean

<http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/43645/i-heard-him-calling-for-me-survivors-account-of-capsized-boat-in-mediterranean>

ECRE, Atlantic Route and Spain: Canary Route Among Deadliest

<https://ecre.org/atlantic-route-and-spain-canary-route-among-deadliest-eu-plans-to-strengthen-cooperation-with-morocco-resumption-of-deportation-flights-double-standards-in-approach-to-arrivals/>

VIDA NUEVA_ La Iglesia en Canarias rescata a los migrantes: invasión de humanidad

<https://www.vidanuevadigital.com/2020/11/09/la-iglesia-en-canarias-rescata-a-los-migrantes-invasion-de-humanidad/>

CONF. EPISCOPAL ESPAÑOLA, Ante la situación de los inmigrantes en las Islas Canarias
<https://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/ante-la-situacion-de-los-inmigrantes-en-las-islas-canarias/>