



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
Commission des Eglises auprès des Migrants en Europe
Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

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European Churches deplore loss of life in Ceuta and Melilla

Letter to EU Ministers calls for investigation into homicide at EU external borders

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), in a letter to the British Minister of Home Affairs Charles Clark, expresses deep concern over recent killings of irregular migrants at the borders of the Spanish enclaves at Ceuta and Melilla. The letter was jointly issued by six Christian organisation, on the occasion of the meeting of the EU Council of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Luxembourg, which will be presided by Clarke today.

In the letter, the Christian organisations express their deep concern about the situation in the Spanish enclaves at Ceuta and Melilla. Over the past weeks, at least five irregular migrants have been shot while attempting to cross the Spanish-Moroccan border at Ceuta and Melilla. So far it is unclear who fired the shots at the migrants and how many casualties occurred in total. While noting that the desperate attempts of irregular migrants to reach EU territory are an everyday reality at the EU's external borders and that many irregular migrants risk their lives to reach the EU every day, they conclude that the recent events in Ceuta and Melilla "mark a new escalation". The Christian organisations stressed that the killings at the Spanish-Moroccan border should, therefore, be thoroughly investigated by the judiciary.

In their further consideration, the six Christian organisations underline their belief that "higher fences will not stop migratory flows" and argue that only a comprehensive migration policy with accessible channels for regular legal migration will have a lasting impact on reducing irregular migration. They also note that the demand of EU labour markets for skilled and unskilled migration as well as the fundamental human rights of migrants should be taken into account when developing such a policy.

With regards to current activities of EU member states to return irregular migrants to Morocco and attempts to conclude readmission agreements with countries of transit in North Africa, they express doubts as to whether or not sufficient respect for human rights in those countries can be guaranteed.

CCME's General Secretary Doris Peschke explained: "For the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the iron curtain, unarmed people have been shot dead at a border of the European Union. This is totally unacceptable and should be a clear sign that the EU cannot continue its current policy on irregular migration, which prioritises border controls over developing alternatives to irregular migration."

The six Christian organisations are: Caritas Europa, CCME (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe), COMECE (Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community), ICMC (International Catholic Migration Commission), JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service), and the Quaker Council for European Affairs.

The full letter can be found at: <http://www.cec-kek.org/English/CCMEact2000.htm>

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