

Boletín 122 by olliemfl

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*Human struggle, international law, politics, life, and death are at play in the Mediterranean Sea. The Libyan coast guard race to intercept small boats sending the occupants of which to who knows where. Meanwhile, Doctors Without Borders and SOS Méditerranée put themselves in danger, working around the clock to save lives and rescue those stranded at sea.*

👋 **Welcome to Boletín**, an English-language newsletter covering historical, cultural and topical stories related to the A Level Spanish course. This week:

1. Issue 122 of Boletín (download the student worksheet, for free, [here](#)).
2. Migratory crossings in the Mediterranean Sea.
3. The Ceuta and Melilla borders.
4. Tier 2 & 3 vocabulary and downloads.

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### 📌 **Issue 122.**

In this week's issue we're going to explore migratory crossings in the Mediterranean Sea and the Ceuta and Melilla borders. The videos this week contain some quite unpleasant things so view discretion is advised.



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## What's happening?

A migratory route in the Mediterranean Sea is now well-established with a large network of smugglers and traffickers moving people precariously across the sea in exchange for money, goods and the promise of a better life.

Migrants, mainly on overcrowded small boats with the aim of reaching Europe, are disembarking on Spanish coastlines although lots disappear or simply don't survive the crossing. Others opt to try their luck rushing hard borders in large groups numbering hundreds or thousands.

Some migrants are able to claim refugee status (bestowing unto them certain legal rights guaranteed by international law, see below) and some are [economic migrants](#) looking to secure a better future for themselves or their families back home.

Spain's territories of Ceuta and Melilla on the northern most tip of Africa are attractive propositions for thousands of migrants because, despite not being mainland Spain, it's known that stepping foot on Spanish (and thus European) territory invokes certain rights (for some) and legally obliges Spain to comply with certain responsibilities as a Member State of the United Nations.

International law, however, is sometimes (flagrantly) flouted.

In 2022, the death of 37 migrants on the Moroccan-Spanish border sparked an investigation by the BBC which found that some migrants were crushed to death and beaten in large groups with no medical assistance provided. Many were also *pushed back* once on Spanish soil and redirected to where they had come from. A breach of international law. Authorities were also caught in the act of digging graves to bury victims before the proper investigations could be carried out. Nobody has been held accountable with Amnesty International stating that:

*Stalled and inadequate investigations into the deaths of 37 migrants on the Moroccan-Spanish border "smacks of a cover-up" by those two nations.*

For their part, the Moroccan authorities claim that the group of migrants were *battle-hardened people with military training coming from conflict zones* and that the border police *acted within the framework to maintain public order*. Online sleuths and investigative journalists are making the link between a recent border control agreement signed by Morocco and Spain in April 2022 which entailed increased funding for Morocco and the latter's severity in guarding the border.

*Morocco has now received €123 million from Spain for migration control since 2019 (this published in October 2022). The EU has distributed €346 million to the North African state in the same period and is due to send €500 million more up to 2027.*

A [documentary](#) about these 37 deaths called *Death on the Border* by BBC Africa Eye is 100% worth a watch but is age restricted so viewer discretion is advised.

Those immigrants who opt for the maritime route face equally low odds of reaching safe and dry land but help is at hand thanks to charitable non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as [Doctors Without Borders](#) and [SOS Méditerranée](#).

These organisations, with their respective rescue ships Geo Barents and Ocean Viking, trawl the Mediterranean Sea (now regarded as the world's deadliest migratory route) intercepting small boats, rescuing migrants, providing shelter, warmth and basic provisions before contacting nearby states to secure safe passage to Europe.

It isn't always easy though for the NGO groups who have to contend with coast guards seeking to intercept the migratory boats before them with often fiery exchanges over the radio and the occasional actual firing of bullets. There are complicated political forces at play behind all of this as days and sometimes weeks pass before a state is willing to accept a ship full of migrants whose backgrounds are unknown.

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## International law

The United Nations plays a significant role in the development and enforcement of international law but there is no central authority and enforcement depends on the cooperation and political will of cooperating states.

The definition of a refugee was agreed upon in 1951 with the [Refugee Convention](#). A refugee is defined as somebody who:

*debido a fundados temores de ser perseguida por motivos de raza, religión, nacionalidad, pertenencia a determinado grupo social u opiniones políticas, se encuentre fuera del país de su nacionalidad y no pueda o, a causa de dichos temores, no quiera acogerse a la protección de tal país; o que, careciendo de nacionalidad y hallándose, a consecuencia de tales acontecimientos, fuera del país donde antes tuviera su residencia habitual, no pueda o, a causa de dichos temores, no quiera regresar a él.*

The reason why migrants want to touch European soil is due to a key principal of the 1951 Refugee Convention which is called *non-refoulement*. I think the meaning is easier to understand in Spanish with *no devolución*. This is defined by the [European Commission](#) as:

*In the refugee context, a core principle of international refugee law that prohibits States from returning refugees in any manner whatsoever to countries or territories in which their lives or freedom may be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.*

Sorry to keep switching between English and Spanish here. I'm hoping that the more ambitious A Level learners amongst you will try to translate these quoted pieces. The article which introduces this *non-refoulement* principle in the original 1951 convention goes like this (in Spanish):

*Ningún Estado Contratante podrá, por expulsión o devolución, poner en modo alguno a un refugiado en las fronteras de los territorios donde su vida o su libertad peligran por causa de*

su raza, religión, nacionalidad, pertenencia a determinado grupo social, o de sus opiniones políticas.

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## The three texts.

### **Médicos sin Fronteras.**1

*La organización Médicos sin Fronteras divulgó el miércoles un nuevo informe en el que denuncia la incapacidad de los estados europeos para evitar la muerte de los migrantes en el mar Mediterráneo, donde en lo que va de 2023 han fallecido o desaparecido alrededor de 2.200 migrantes. Titulado “Nadie viene a rescatarnos” el informe se basa en datos recogidos a bordo del buque de rescate Geo Barens documentando “numerosos casos en los que los Estados costeros europeos ponen, conscientemente, en peligro la vida de las personas al retrasar los rescates o dificultar las devoluciones a lugares seguros”.*

### **Epicentro del Auge.**2

*La inmigración irregular bate récords en España con la llegada de 46.862 extranjeros sin documentación al país hasta el 15 de noviembre, un balance impulsado por las cifras disparadas en Canarias, que ha recibido un 118% más de inmigrantes que el año pasado. Este mes continúa con la tendencia que ya se marcó en octubre, que también rompió récords. La gran mayoría, 45.707, llegaron por mar y su principal destino fue Canarias, donde han arribado este año en precarias embarcaciones 32.436 personas, frente a las 14.875 de 2022. Se han contabilizado 475 cayucos y pateras, un 42,6% más que en 2022 en estas fechas.*

### **Disparos en el Mar.**3

*Durante una operación de rescate realizada por SOS Méditerranée, la guardia costera libia disparó tiros cerca del barco de la ONG, poniendo en riesgo la vida de la tripulación y de los migrantes. La Unión Europea y Suiza continúan financiándola a pesar de sus vínculos criminales y el abuso de los migrantes. Devolver a las personas a lugares donde enfrentan amenazas a su vida o libertad es contrario al principio de “no devolución” consagrado en la Convención de Refugiados. Los refugiados pueden ingresar irregularmente a un país de asilo, y no deberían ser penalizados por tratar de buscar seguridad y protección”.*

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## Tier 2/3 vocabulary.

- divulgar (vb) - *to circulate, make public, spread or disseminate (information)*
- fallecer (vb) - *to pass away*
- alrededor de - *around*
- retrasar (vb) - *to delay, hold up or postpone*
- dificultar (vb) - *to hinder, stand in the way, complicate or make difficult*
- la cifra (nfs) - *the figure*
- ONG (organización no gubernamental) - NGO (non-governmental organization)
- disparado (adj) - *sky high, through the roof, very high*
- principal (adj) - *main*

- arribar (vb) - *to arrive, dock*
  - contabilizar (adj) - *to count or record*
  - un cayuco (nms) - *a small boat*
  - una patera (nfs) - *a small boat or dinghy used to transport immigrants*
  - realizar (vb) - *to carry out*
  - disparar tiros (vb) - *to shoot rounds/bullets*
  - la tripulación (nfs) - *the crew*
  - devolver (vb) - *to return (somebody or something) to where it came from*
  - ingresar (vb) - *to enter*
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Thanks for reading,


Ollie






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[1](#)

<https://www.telesurtv.net/news/migrantes-muertos-mediterraneo-20231122-0011.html>

[2](#)

<https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20231116/inmigracion-irregular-bate-records-llegadas-canarias/2461065.shtml>

[3](#)

<https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/politica/europa-socava-la-ley-de-refugiados-mientras-aumentan-las-muertes-de-migrantes/48749080>