

Ceuta, 60,000 entries from Morocco in 24 hours: Spain deploys the Army. Clash with Italy over Schengen. France strengthens border controls.

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An unprecedented migratory crisis has hit Ceuta, the Spanish enclave located on the North African coast and bordering Morocco, considered the gateway to the European Union on African soil. Tens of thousands of people entered Spanish territory irregularly within a few hours, forcing Madrid to mobilize Army units in support of the Guardia Civil and other security forces.

The president of the autonomous city, Juan Jesús Vivas, spoke of about 60,000 arrivals.

Most of the migrants, predominantly young people from Morocco, are said to have reached Ceuta by sea, swimming around the Tarajal breakwater or using makeshift means. Others managed to cross the land perimeter.

According to Spanish authorities, about half of the people who entered have already voluntarily returned to Morocco thanks to coordination between Madrid and Rabat. Thousands of migrants, however, remain in the autonomous city, putting pressure on reception facilities and essential services.

Ceuta calls for a national emergency

The president of Ceuta, Juan Jesús Vivas, has asked the central government for extraordinary measures, a unique coordination of operations, and the immediate strengthening of the security apparatus.

Local authorities have described an extremely difficult situation. Reception facilities are overloaded, while Guardia Civil, Policía Nacional, Policía Local, and military personnel are engaged in border surveillance, identifying those who entered, and protecting urban areas.

The President of the Government Pedro Sánchez and the Minister of the Interior Fernando Grande-Marlaska traveled to Ceuta to directly oversee the emergency. Madrid has also ordered the strengthening of security devices in Melilla, the second Spanish enclave in North Africa, to prevent new mass crossings.

The Army deployed on the beaches

The Spanish security forces, under exceptional pressure, have received support from military units already present in the enclave.

Soldiers have been deployed along the beaches, near the border, and in major transit areas. Their task is to assist in territory surveillance, provide logistical support to civil authorities, and prevent the situation from deteriorating in terms of public order.

The deployment also includes armored vehicles and military vehicles used for patrolling and personnel transport. Images from Ceuta show military personnel and Army vehicles positioned along the coastline as hundreds of people reach the shore.

Morocco's delicate position

The crisis brings the focus back to the relations between Madrid and Rabat. Ceuta and Melilla represent the only land borders between the European Union and the African continent and

have been under strong migratory pressure for years.

Moroccan authorities subsequently deployed police units to contain departures and facilitate the return of their citizens. However, the debate remains open on Rabat's actual capacity or willingness to prevent such a large movement of people.

The Spanish government has spoken of a violation of its territorial integrity. Some observers link the initial relaxation of Moroccan controls to recent diplomatic tensions between Madrid and Rabat, but the Moroccan government denies having deliberately favored the crossings.

A similar precedent occurred in May 2021, when thousands of people entered Ceuta following a sudden relaxation of Moroccan controls. However, the current crisis has reached much larger dimensions.

The clash between Italy and Spain

The crisis on the ground has been compounded by a harsh diplomatic confrontation between Rome and Madrid.

The first Italian stance came from the Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who through her social channels described the images from Ceuta as proof that uncontrolled illegal immigration represents a concrete threat to the security of European borders.

Meloni reported having consulted with the Minister of the Interior Matteo Piantedosi and announced that the Italian government was evaluating necessary initiatives to protect the national territory, including the possible suspension of free movement with Spain.

The Prime Minister's position was later supported by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Tajani, who expressed favor for the possible reinstatement of controls on connections from Spain.

Legally, Italy can temporarily reintroduce controls at internal borders, including airports, ports, and maritime and land connections, citing security and public order needs.

The Italian statements provoked a particularly harsh reaction from the Spanish government. The Minister of Foreign Affairs José Manuel Albares summoned the Italian ambassador in Madrid to formally express Spain's dissent.

Albares deemed the words from Rome inappropriate and accused the Italian government of engaging in "partisan demagogy" instead of showing solidarity with a European state under exceptional migratory pressure.

According to Madrid, the Ceuta crisis requires a common European Union response, based on strengthening external borders, cooperation with countries of origin and transit, and operational support to Spain, not on closing internal borders.

> *The images coming from Ceuta are impressive and demonstrate, once again, that uncontrolled illegal immigration represents a concrete threat to the security of European borders.*
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> *I have consulted with the Minister of the Interior Matteo Piantedosi....*
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> *— Giorgia Meloni (@GiorgiaMeloni) July 30, 2026*

The European Union offers support

The European Commission has declared its readiness to provide Spain with additional financial, technical, and operational assistance, including through the strengthening of Frontex's intervention.

Brussels aims to accelerate the identification procedures and the repatriation of people lacking the requirements for international protection. At the same time, several European governments have requested clarifications on the functioning of border controls at Ceuta's external border.

France, while not formally requesting Spain's suspension from the Schengen area, has strengthened controls at the Franco-Spanish border to prevent potential secondary movements towards its territory. Paris's position thus differs from Italy's: not a request for exclusion or suspension of Madrid, but an operational tightening of internal border controls.

The crisis once again highlights the deep divisions within the European Union on immigration management. On one side are the countries calling for greater solidarity and redistribution of migrants; on the other, those who prioritize preventing entries, strengthening controls, and assigning greater responsibilities to the state tasked with protecting the external border.

A migratory crisis turned political

What happened in Ceuta no longer represents just a local emergency. The entry of about 60,000 people, the deployment of the Army, and the pressure on the city's facilities have turned the event into a national security issue for Spain and a significant European crisis.

The summoning of the Italian ambassador also marks the opening of a serious political confrontation between two European Union member countries and NATO allies.

In the coming hours, it will be necessary to understand whether cooperation between Spain and Morocco will manage to definitively stop the crossings and whether Rome and Madrid will be able to lower the tone of the confrontation.

Otherwise, the Ceuta crisis could turn into a broader confrontation on the resilience of external borders and the future of the Schengen area.