



PRESS RELEASE

Closing of investigation in 6 February 2014 Ceuta police operation causing 15 deaths

Four years of impunity: Spanish judge refuses to hear survivors and to fully investigate lethal push-back at Ceuta border

Berlin/Madrid 5 February 2018 Four years ago on 6 February at least 15 people died and several more were injured during a brutal push back operation by the Spanish Guardia Civil - a paramilitary police force - at the border between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of [Ceuta](#) on the beach of El Tarajal.

On 28 January 2018 the judge in charge of investigating these events closed the case against officers of the Guardia Civil for the second time. This decision came though the regional court already quashed a similar decision in January 2017, explicitly ordering the identification, location and hearing of direct victims and witnesses. Subsequently two victims now residing in Germany informed the judge of their willingness to testify. However the judge hindered their participation in the investigation by closing it without hearing them.

“By refusing to hear direct victims of the events who came forward to provide their testimonies, the judge is trampling basic human rights underfoot”, said Wolfgang Kaleck, General Secretary of the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), in reaction to the decision. “Apparently the investigative judge took the view that testimonies from undocumented migrants should be presumed generally unreliable in a criminal investigation. This is unacceptable.” ECCHR’s cooperation lawyer, Gonzalo Boye from Madrid, immediately appealed this decision. ECCHR will continue supporting victims in seeking accountability for these brutal push backs.

Background

On 6 February 2014, 400 people attempted to swim around the embankment separating Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. Guardia Civil officials attacked them with tear gas, rubber bullets and batons to prevent them from reaching the Spanish shore. Until now this fatal police operation has had no legal or political consequences.

ECCHR works with survivors, partner organizations Brot für die Welt and Pro Asyl and with cooperating lawyers to secure refugees’ basic right to have and claim rights. Since 2014 ECCHR has initiated various legal interventions against the EU’s push-back practices and against specific push-backs at the Spanish-Moroccan borders of Ceuta and [Melilla](#) and at the Macedonian-Greek border of [Idomeni](#).

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