



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT 2024

## Refugees in Spain and Europe

**CEA(R)**

Comisión Española  
de Ayuda al Refugiado



**The Spanish Commission for  
Refugees Aid (CEAR) is a  
non-governmental organisation  
founded in 1979 with the aim of  
working together with citizens to  
defend the right to asylum.**

**[www.cear.es](http://www.cear.es)**



**Recognition - Non-Commercial - No Derivative Work**

It allows others to download the works and share them with others, as long as their authorship is acknowledged, but they cannot be changed in any way or used commercially.

The photographs included in this report are protected by copyright.

Cover photo: A Palestinian woman stands amidst the massive destruction caused by Israeli airstrikes in the popular al-Rimal district of Gaza City, 10 October 2023. © Mohammed Zaanoun

# INTRODUCTION

The *22nd Annual Report of the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR)* analyzes the situation of refugees in the world, the European Union, and, above all, Spain.

The global figure for forced displacement continued to rise in 2023 to 110 million people, according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Venezuela and South Sudan, and Palestine, are the main countries of origin for refugees. The impact of climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation continued to increase internal displacement in countries such as Colombia, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The EU reached an agreement on the European Pact on Migration and Asylum at the end of 2023 that poses serious protection risks, deepens a border externalisation approach and fails to progress towards greater solidarity and the equitable sharing of responsibilities among Member States. The 2024 European elections are an opportunity to focus on putting people and their rights at the centre of European migration and asylum policies.

Spain once again ranked third among EU countries accommodating asylum seekers in terms of volume, with Venezuela and Colombia as the main countries of origin. However, Spain was also the last EU country in terms of recognition of protection. Only 12 % of the 88,042 applications ruled on were granted international protection. A lower percentage than the previous year and increasingly distant from the European average of 42 %.

It is particularly of concern, in addition to the emergency in the Canary Islands due to the historic record of maritime arrivals of people from West Africa, the situation of hundreds of asylum seekers crammed for months at Madrid-Barajas Airport, most of them fleeing the conflict in Somalia.

Among the challenges for the reception and social inclusion of migrants and refugees in Spain, the difficulties in obtaining an asylum appointment, registering or opening a bank account stand out, among other obstacles that affect the lack of real equality in access to housing, employment, health or education rights for these people.

Lastly, for yet another year, CEAR has presented the authorities with a list of its main proposals to bolster the protection of refugees based on a firm commitment to the right to asylum •





Afghan women and children wait in a truck with all their belongings at the Torkham border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan after the Pakistani government ordered their return. October 2023.  
© Elise Blanchard / New York Times / ContactoPhoto







Maryam Hussein makes a 13-day pilgrimage across the desert with her daughters and livestock in search of water and pasture to reach the Sincaro community in the Sanaag region of northern Somalia. This region of the Horn of Africa is experiencing the worst drought recorded in 40 years, which is causing thousands to be forcibly displaced. January 2023. © Pablo Tosco



## THE GLOBAL EXODUS

**As of mid-2023, according to the UNHCR, there were 110 million people in the world displaced** by a combination of persistent and emerging conflicts, human rights violations, economic, environmental and food crises, among other threats that disproportionately affect women and children. A record number that is expected to increase due to the violent events of the last months of the year, such as the brutal Israeli military offensive on Gaza, which has displaced at least 1.7 million people, or the growing socio-political instability ravaging the Sahel.

Of these, **36.4 million were refugees**, of whom 30.5 million were under the mandate of UNHCR and **5.9 million were Palestinians** under UNRWA protection; **6.1 million were applicants for international protection**, and 5.3 million were from Venezuela, in need of protection for humanitarian reasons. On the other hand, the majority of displacement occurred within countries' borders,

with **57 million people internally displaced**. Additionally, some 1.3 million were stateless displaced persons, mostly Rohingya.

Syria (6.5 million), Afghanistan (6.1 million), Ukraine (5.9 million), Venezuela (5.6 million), South Sudan (2.2 million) and Myanmar (1.3 million) were the main countries of origin for refugees. Iran (3.4 million), Turkey (3.4 million), Germany (2.5 million), Colombia (2.5 million), Pakistan (2.1 million) and Uganda (1.5 million) hosted the majority of refugees. For another year, **75 % of forcibly displaced persons were hosted in low- and middle-income countries**.

In the first six months of 2023, 6.8 million new forcible internal displacements were recorded, 83 % of them in sub-Saharan Africa and mainly in Sudan, where the war that broke out in April further deteriorated the already serious humanitarian situation in the country.

It was of particular concern the war in **Ukraine**, which is entering its third year with no end to indiscriminate violence, war crimes and systematic human rights

In 2023, there were more than 110 million forcibly displaced people in the world





Supporters of Senegalese opposition leader Ousmane Sonko gather during a protest to demand the release of alleged political prisoners and support their leader before he appears in court on defamation charges, in Dakar, Senegal. March 2023.  
© Zohra Bensemra / Reuters / ContactoPhoto

violations by Russia. Equally worrying was the humanitarian disaster in **Afghanistan**, where human rights setbacks continued, especially for women and girls, while thousands of refugees were at risk as a result of Pakistan's forced expulsions. In **Syria**, after thirteen years of conflict with no visible progress towards peace, more than half of the population is displaced and is also subject to forced expulsions from Turkey. The Report also analyses the socio-political crisis in **Senegal** since 2021 and which has worsened since June 2023, forcing thousands of people, especially young people, to flee in search of protection and safety.

With 66 % of displaced people in protracted refugee situations, it is more necessary than ever to find durable solutions and complementary pathways such as voluntary, safe and dignified return, local inclusion and **resettlement to third countries so that displaced people can rebuild their lives in peace and dignity**. Only 59,500 people were resettled in the first half of 2023, 400,000 people returned voluntarily to their countries of origin and only 20,500 people obtained citizenship in their host countries.

Finally, it is worth noting the disproportionate impact of the global environmental crisis on displaced people, 76 % of whom are in the countries most exposed to the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation. After fleeing conflict, human rights violations and persecution, displaced people face droughts,

floods, extreme temperatures or natural disasters such as the earthquakes in Libya and Morocco. These climatic and environmental impacts lead to shortages of basic resources such as water and food, contributing to political and social instability, worsening food crises, aggravating armed conflicts and exacerbating pre-existing inequalities for populations in the Global South. A **record 32.6 million people were internally displaced by climate-related events** in 2022. In countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia, extractive activities and environmental degradation have escalated violence and forced thousands to flee their homes. While some progress has been made in the international recognition of environmental displacement in terms of climate justice, such as the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28, there are still fundamental challenges, such as the lack of consensus on terminology and legal protection, which require an urgent global response •

75% of forcibly displaced persons are hosted in low- and middle-income countries



8

Migrants rescued by the MSF rescue ship Geo Barents, operated by Médecins Sans Frontières. The ship heads to the Italian port of Bari in the central Mediterranean Sea on 25 March 2023.  
© Darrin Zammit Lupi / Reuters / ContactoPhoto



## THE EUROPEAN UNION AND REFUGEES

In 2023, **292,985 migrants arrived in Europe irregularly, which represents a 54.5 %** in the number of arrivals compared to the previous year (189,620) and the highest number recorded since 2016. 91 % of these irregular arrivals were by sea, with Italy (54 %), Spain (19 %) and Greece (16 %) as the main destinations. The risk of these crossings is reflected in the intolerable **4064 people who lost their lives or went missing** in 2023 on the Mediterranean (3,105) and Atlantic (959) routes, according to IOM data, with the Central Mediterranean being the deadliest.

The **number of applications for international protection in the EU also increased to 1,129,800, 17 % more** than those registered in 2022 (963,067) and the highest number since 2016. Germany (351,510),

France (166,880), Spain (163,220) and Italy (135,815) were the main receiving countries and accounted for two thirds of the total number of applications in the EU. Syria (186,375), Afghanistan (109,555), Turkey (94,500), Venezuela (67,805) and Colombia (62,840) were the most represented nationalities in these applications. There was an increase in the number of asylum applications submitted by children without family references, which reached 41,495, compared to 40,215 the previous year.

In addition, by the end of 2023, some **4.31 million people who fled Ukraine** following the Russian invasion of 24 February 2022 were granted temporary protection status.

In 2023, there was a 54.5% increase in the number of migrants arriving in Europe in an irregular manner, mostly by sea



The **rate of recognition of international protection in the EU stood at 41.8 %** in 2023, with 3 % more than in 2022. This is the highest percentage since 2016, although the increase is mainly due to the number of favourable decisions granting subsidiary protection, which is less protective than refugee status. In contrast, Spain recorded the lowest recognition rate of all EU Member States, only 12 %. Another issue is that 1,144,085 applications for international protection remained unresolved in EU Member States, an increase of 29.5 % compared to the previous year.

Also, in relation to durable solutions, it is underlined that during 2023 only 12,567 persons were resettled in EU Member States as a whole, which is 4,128 persons less than in 2022.

The **European Pact on Migration and Asylum**, adopted in April 2024, poses significant protection risks, deepens a **border externalisation approach and threatens respect for the rights** of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Contrary to the initial objective of achieving greater harmonisation of European asylum standards and a more equitable sharing of responsibilities among member states, the Pact strengthens border controls and focuses on preventing people from arriving by all means and on expelling them as quickly as possible. The introduction of new controls and ac-

celerated asylum and return procedures at the border, together with the lack of efforts to extend legal and safe channels, pose further obstacles to accessing the right to asylum for those in need.

Given these risks and the regulatory complexity of the Pact, the implementation phase that begins in Member States such as Spain in the next two years is essential to guarantee the highest standards of protection. It is also crucial that, with a view to the next European legislative cycle, the EU takes as a model its response to the forced displacement of Ukraine, and promotes a change of direction in migration and asylum policies that places people and the protection of their rights at the centre as a fundamental pillar for a more effective, protective and supportive European Asylum System •

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum reinforces the externalisation of the borders and puts at risk the respect of human rights

The Tunisian National Maritime Guard intercepts vessels of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea before pushing them back to the coast of the city of Sfax in southern Tunisia. June 2023.  
© Hasan Mrad / Zuma Press / ContactoPhoto





# ACCESS TO THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM IN SPAIN

In 2023, **Spain experienced an unparalleled increase in applications for international protection, reaching a total of 163,220**, which marked a significant increase of 37.3 % over the previous year. The growing trend that began in 2012, only interrupted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, continues, despite the serious obstacles to accessing the international protection procedure in Spain. This number is complemented by 33,928 new grants of temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine in 2023.

**Seven of the top ten nationalities of asylum seekers in Spain were from Latin America**, with Venezuela (60,534), Colombia (53,564) and Peru (14,308) as the three main countries of origin, accounting for almost 80 % of the total number of applications. The Community of Madrid was the main recipient of applications for international protection (52,684), followed by Andalusia (25,948), Catalonia (14,775), the Canary Islands (8,621) and Galicia (8,438). The priority place of submission of applications for international protection in Spain is once again the national territory, where 96.91 % of these applications were submitted.

In terms of the profiles of applicants, there was an increase in the number of applications submitted by women, as well as children; the latter accounted for 19 % of the total number of asylum applications in 2023.

In terms of decisions, despite the fact that more applications were processed than in previous years, **the rate of recognition of international protection decreased from 16.5 % in 2022 to 12 % in 2023, making Spain the third country in the EU with the highest number of applications and the last in terms of recognition of protection.** This decrease was mainly

Spain was the third EU country with the highest number of asylum applications and the last country with the lowest recognition rate

An asylum seeker holds a computer with a sticker saying «We remain without an asylum appointment» during a rally-performance under the slogan '«No appointments, no rights»' in front of the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration in Madrid, Spain. February 2023.  
© A. Pérez Meca / Europa Press / ContactoPhoto





## Serious problems in accessing the asylum procedure persist

due to a reduction in the number of grants of subsidiary protection. There was an increase in the recognition of protection on humanitarian grounds for Venezuelans (47 %), while four out of ten asylum applications were rejected. On the other hand, the number of applications pending in Spain increased by 56 % compared to the previous year, with 191,095 persons awaiting a decision on which their lives depend.

**Serious problems identified in accessing the asylum procedure persisted.** The unavailability and unpredictability of appointments to apply for asylum fuelled an irregular market for buying and selling appointments, rendering protection needs invisible and leaving thousands of people helpless for a period of up to nine months.

Since summer 2023, **Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport** has witnessed an exponential increase in the number of asylum applications, mainly from people from Kenya and Somalia, leading to overcrowded facilities and delays of up to 30 days for the formalisation of asylum applications. In December 2023, more than 250 asylum seekers were being held in unacceptable and undignified conditions of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in rooms at the airport, with a lack of attention to specific needs, such as the detection of possible victims of trafficking. These conditions violate European regulations on the dignified treatment of asylum seekers and prompted legal action and requests for urgent measures by organisations such as CEAR and the Ombudsman. It is of concern that the measures adopted, contrary to a protection approach, were aimed at **preventing people fleeing these conflicts from arriving at the airport, requiring an airport transit visa** for people from Kenya and Senegal.

Difficulties persist in accessing the information and assistance needed to apply for international protection in the **Foreigner Detention Centres** (Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros, CIE). In addition, cases have been documented of people who, after requesting protection in the territory and being detained in the CIE, were unable to access the legal remedies necessary to defend their rights. These practices violate the rights of the persons detained and demonstrate the ineffectiveness of CIEs in fulfilling their objectives.

Lastly, cases were reported of **stowaways** arriving in Spain in extreme conditions, clinging to the anchor of a ship or to the rudder blade. Although some people were able to access the asylum procedure, uncertainties remain about the application of the stowaway protocol and legal assistance in these cases •







## SITUATION ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER

**During 2023, a considerable increase in the number of arrivals of migrants at Spain's Southern Border was observed, especially by sea.** Although there was initially a decreasing trend in arrivals since March 2022, due to the migration containment measures implemented in Morocco and Western Sahara, from July 2023 onwards there was a break with the reactivation of the deadly Canary Islands route. Of the total number of arrivals registered in Spain (56,852), **seven out of ten were concentrated on the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands (a total of 39,910).** This drastic migratory surge triggered a humanitarian emergency unprecedented since the so-called 'crisis of the cayuco' of 2006,

and represents a 155 % increase in arrivals compared to the previous year.

In terms of routes, exit points, vessels and profiles of migrants, there were some changes. For example, there was an increase in arrivals from Nador (Morocco), and to a lesser extent from Algeria, to destinations such as Almería and Granada, mainly using inflatable boats. Murcia and the Balearic Islands also maintained the pace of arrivals, while Cadiz saw a 50 % decrease in arrivals compared to the previous year. Significant fluctuations were registered in the Canary Islands throughout the year, with a notable increase in August

Seven out of ten migrants arriving at Spain's southern border crossed the Atlantic to the Canary Islands



Spanish security forces guard the border crossing at the Benzu district following an attempt by around 200 migrants to jump the fence, who subsequently were detained by Moroccan security forces. Ceuta, Spain, October 2023. © Antonio Sempere / Europa Press / ContactoPhoto



and September, and the highest peak in October. **Departures were mainly concentrated in Senegal, and to a lesser extent from Gambia, with El Hierro and Tenerife as the main destinations.** The vessels used were cayucos with a capacity of more than 100 passengers. The Canary Islands route also saw an increase in arrivals of unaccompanied minors and the capacity of the protection system in the archipelago was exceeded.

The **state response to the humanitarian situation** was limited by the lack of budget and coordination, although extraordinary measures were activated, such as the declaration of emergency and the opening of new reception places on the mainland. However, problems persisted, such as the identification of people who died at sea and the search for missing relatives. The implementation of large Centros de Acogida de Emergencia (Emergency Reception Centres, CAED) on the mainland was proposed as a solution to relieve the islands; although effective, this measure faced logistical and humanitarian challenges.

In **Ceuta and Melilla**, there was a slight decrease in arrivals by land, while arrivals by sea decreased significantly, which could be due to the increased pressure exerted by Morocco on migrants and raids at the border. In both autonomous cities there was an increase in

applications for international protection with changes in nationalities. The high percentage of people from Latin America who applied for international protection, due to the problems of access to the procedure in the peninsula, has placed these nationalities in second place, after Morocco. In the Centros de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes (Centre for Temporary Detention, CETI), occupancy fluctuated, with the entry of people of Moroccan and Algerian nationalities and the reduction in transfers to the mainland being of note.

In general terms, the profile of people arriving at the Southern Border in 2023 was Senegalese (32 %), Moroccan (25 %) and, to a lesser extent, Algerian (12 %), Malian (11 %) and Gambian (8 %). The reasons that prompted people to move in the Southern Border in 2023 were related to the **political and socio-economic instability of West African countries**. However, it is a multi-causal phenomenon with a common driver: the lack of human rights protection. In addition to difficulties in accessing basic services such as health, factors such as uncertainty and lack of prospects for a stable and prosperous future contribute to this migration. Significantly, women face additional challenges, such as gender-based violence, trafficking and sexual violence, both in their countries of origin and during the journey •



# RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION

The year 2023 was the first year of implementation of the concerted action model, a new management and funding mechanism for the reception system for international and temporary protection, demanded for years by CEAR and others, which replaces the previous model based on periodic grants. The new model provides stability and long-term planning, with equitable territorial allocation of resources and greater transparency through information exchange and greater coordination. Moreover, the flexibility of the system allows it to adapt to the specific needs of the context and of the applicants for international protection, as demonstrated by the management of a large number of arrivals on Spanish shores in 2023.

While in general terms **the new system of concerted action is an improvement for the care of vulnerable persons, challenges remain**, such as the management and evaluation of results, adaptation to specific needs and the revision of prices to ensure sustainability and quality.

The reception of displaced persons from Ukraine during 2022 and 2023 was a milestone in Spain. The swift implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive ensured immediate access to protection for more than 200,000 Ukrainians in Spain. **The coordinated and supportive response at state and EU level set a precedent for dealing with future emergencies.** To meet the need for places, around 21,000 more places were made available than the previous year, with the support of the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration. Free transportation, inclusion services and access to economic, social and cultural rights were provided. Moreover, Centros de Recepción, Acogida y Derivación (Reception, Reception and Referral Centres, CREADE) were set up to facilitate access to documentation and the reception system for new arrivals. On a positive note, during 2023, the CREADEs began to establish themselves as access centres for other nationalities. However, access to documentation for applicants for international protection is still limited to temporary protection.



A woman waits to be assisted at the Reception, Attention and Referral Centre (CREADE) in Malaga, a reference point in the area of Temporary Protection for people coming from Ukraine and, from 2023, a gateway to the reception system for people of other nationalities. October 2023. © CEAR





## The coordinated and solidarity-based response to the Ukrainian displacement set a precedent for future emergencies

### **In 2023, the Spanish reception and inclusion system had to face a new emergency in the Canary Islands.**

Nevertheless, on this occasion the response of the international protection system did not facilitate movement to a safe place, nor freedom of movement for the people who arrived, nor was there any great show of solidarity between administrations or society, a situation that was evident in the imbalances between autonomous communities in the distribution of migrants arriving in the Canary Islands on 27 October 2023, with 17 people transferred to Navarre, 36 to the Basque Country and 1,988 to Catalonia.

In 2023, **the majority of people arriving in the Canary Islands expressed their wish to apply for international protection**, in contrast to previous years. However, the difficulties in obtaining appointments to start this process, together with the limitations on the length of stay in humanitarian care places, left many people unprotected and at risk of social exclusion as they were unable to access the reception system.

**A major challenge for the reception and inclusion system was the persistent difficulties faced by migrants and refugees in obtaining access to economic, social and cultural rights.** Bureaucratic red tape, ethnic and racial discrimination, the digital divide and, in particular, barriers to registering or opening a bank account, constitute serious obstacles to their access to the right to housing, employment, health or education, placing them in a situation of great vulnerability. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of recognition of asylum seekers' documentation and the low rate of recognition of international protection •



# 30 PROPOSALS TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES

CEAR has prepared a set of proposals addressed to the Spanish authorities and to society as a whole to guarantee the rights of people in need of international protection, regardless of their origin and with full respect for international law and human rights.

## Implement the New European Pact on Migration and Asylum in a way that shows solidarity and guarantees the rights of migrants and refugees

1. Advocate and promote solidarity and co-responsibility among EU Member States in the reception and protection of asylum seekers and refugees. To this end, it is essential to ensure that, in the application of the New European Pact on Migration and Asylum, which contains a set of measures detrimental to the right to asylum, Spain adopts an approach of full respect for human rights, solidarity and with the maximum guarantees and standards of protection provided for in national legislation.

2. As established in the Covenant, create an independent human rights follow-up and monitoring mechanism for asylum procedures, with special attention to those at the border. These should include the participation of the international bodies of the United Nations system with a presence in Spain, as well as that of the Ombudsman and civil society organisations working with migrants and refugees.

## Guarantee access to the asylum procedure

3. Make a greater commitment to the adoption of legal and safe routes to protection. This implies more ambitious resettlement quotas, increasing the number of people eventually resettled and expanding the number of eligible nationalities. It also entails more flexible reunification and family extension requirements, as well as the issuance of humanitarian visas. Develop the procedure of article 38 of the Asylum Law, with concrete measures for physical access to embassies, criteria to be taken into account by diplomatic staff, legal and interpreter assistance, as well as the possibility of filing effective appeals.

4. Guarantee the implementation of programmes to detect migrant children without family references in need of international protection, ensuring the provision of information from a child's perspective on access to the right to asylum.

5. Guarantee access to the procedure under the terms established in Directive 2013/32/EU on common procedures for granting or withdrawing international protection. To this end, it is necessary to improve and put an end to the shortcomings of the appointment system for registration and formalisation of applications for international protection, as well as to admit the ex-



pression of willingness to apply for international protection by any legally valid means.

6. Amend the joint instructions of 28 November 2007 of the Directorates-General of the Police and Civil Guard, Domestic Policy and Immigration on the treatment of foreign stowaways, to guarantee their access to the international protection procedure, together with legal and interpreter assistance from the first contact with the Spanish authorities.

7. Put an end to the illegal refoulement of persons arriving in Ceuta, Melilla and the Mediterranean islets, ensuring that the application of the Tenth Additional Provision of the Aliens Act is fully in line with international human rights protection standards to which Spain is a signatory, as required by the Constitutional Court, in particular the possibility of access to an application for international protection.

## **Improving the quality of the international protection procedure in Spain**

8. Guarantee that interviews for the formalisation of applications for international protection comply with the minimum requirements set out in Article 17 of the Asylum Law, by providing sufficient human resources and continuous training for the officials in charge of conducting them.

9. Guarantee quality interpretation in a language that the applicant understands and in which he/she can express in detail the reasons for his/her application. This guarantee must be extended to the entire procedure, including notifications of decisions on admission, inadmissibility or refusal of international protection.

10. Transform the CREADEs set up in response to the emergency in Ukraine into spaces for registration, documentation and access to the procedure for all asylum seekers, regardless of their place of origin.

11. Provide immediate access to the regular international protection procedure for applicants with specific needs who are at a border or border crossing point, as well as in detention centres for foreigners, under Article 24 of Directive 2013/32/EU on common procedures for granting or withdrawing international protection, in order to avoid them being subject to accelerated procedures in which they cannot receive the assistance they require.

12. Strengthen the human and material resources of the Asylum and Refuge Office in order to process the almost 200,000 pending cases and boost the registration, processing and resolution of family extension cases. The aim of this measure is to guarantee the effective right to family life for persons granted international protection.

13. Guarantee, by means of a reform of article 135 of the Law on Contentious Administrative Jurisdiction, the suspensive effect of appeals against refusals of international protection under the terms of article 46 of Directive 2013/32/EU on Procedures.

## **Extend the cases of international protection**

14. The competent authorities in asylum matters should apply broad interpretations of the definition of refugee contained in the 1951 Geneva Convention or of the subsidiary protection provided for in the current law, in order to guarantee, among other cases, the protection of persons fleeing as a result of climate change or environmental degradation.

15. Make progress in the recognition of the right to asylum or subsidiary protection status in cases of persecution by non-state actors and serious human rights violations, when people lack effective protection by the authorities of their country of residence or nationality.



## Reinforce and extend the reception system

16. Guarantee early detection of the specific needs of persons seeking international protection from the first contact with the authorities (manifestation of willingness or in cases where this cannot even be formulated) with clear protocols and indicators to be applied by all officials involved, who should receive specialised training.

17. Adapt the capacity of the Spanish reception system to the real need for a response by increasing the number of places in the different phases of the international protection system, as well as the capacity of emergency and humanitarian reception facilities for migrants and potential applicants for international protection. This adaptation should also involve the creation and increase of places for people with specific needs, especially those related to the treatment of mental health problems.

18. Design equitable territorial distribution mechanisms that ensure compliance with the responsibility derived from international obligations and that guarantee a balance in the assistance provided to people in the international protection system and in the response to humanitarian emergencies. These mechanisms should incorporate equitable and fair criteria in the allocation of places, such as population or income level, among others.

19. Set up contingency plans for future increases in arrivals of applicants for international protection by air. Adequate human, material and technological resources should be provided at border posts to ensure access to the procedure without delays, and adequate facilities for the reception of applicants for international protection at airports that meet the minimum requirements of Directive 2013/33/EU, and guarantee decent living conditions, adequate health standards and the possibility of communicating effectively.

## Towards a public policy for humanitarian emergencies

20. Improve the humanitarian response and protection of rights in emergency situations arising from the increase in arrivals of migrants and potential asylum seekers, through the creation of versatile action protocols and contingency plans for the structural expansion of the capacity of the humanitarian reception system, guaranteeing dignified reception conditions and ensuring the financial and institutional sustainability of the system at all times.

21. Avoid protracted stays of migrants and potential applicants for international protection in supercamps or other facilities designed for the first emergency. Expedite the transfer to the mainland of migrants arriving in the Canary Islands, Balearic Islands or Ceuta and Melilla.

## More rights in a society committed to people in need of international protection

22. Promote, via public administrations, a positive approach to institutional and political communication towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, equivalent to the message conveyed in the face of the displacement caused by the war in Ukraine, which is key to generating an inclusive narrative and a feeling of solidarity in all spheres of society.

23. Promote policies of coexistence and the fight against discrimination, from a community approach and with maximum proximity to citizens, which include a strategy to raise awareness and fight against xenophobic and racist attitudes and discourse, the criminalisation of refugees, disinformation and hoaxes in the media and online platforms.

24. Apply the Comprehensive Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination Law in a guaranteed manner, establishing an independent equality authority, strengthening the system of sanctions and improving the comprehensive protection of victims, in order to move towards the enjoyment of all rights without discrimination and to comply with the principle of equality in



a broad and comprehensive manner. Maintain and provide adequate resources to the Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination's (CEDRE) Service for Victims of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination.

25. Approval of the Comprehensive Law for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings that addresses all typologies, whether or not related to organised crime, regardless of the sex, age, administrative status or nationality of the victims. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure training in international protection and the detection of potential victims of trafficking for the agents of the National Police Force who work in any border device.

26. Eliminate existing obstacles to migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' access to economic, social and cultural rights. Facilitate and expedite registration procedures, especially in cases where persecuted persons are unable to provide the documentation that must be issued by the authorities of their country of residence or nationality. It is also imperative to promote actions to ensure that banks comply with current regulations on access to and maintenance of basic payment accounts.

27. Promote the approval of the Law Proposition for an extraordinary regularisation of foreigners in Spain, essential to guarantee access to rights and social inclusion of migrants, especially those whose application for international protection or protection for humanitarian reasons in Spain has been rejected.

## **A foreign policy consistent with human rights that fights the causes of forced displacement and promotes the right to return.**

28. Promote effective measures to put an end to the current genocide in Palestine and guarantee the protection of displaced persons and their right to return. To this end, it is essential that Spain formalises international recognition of the Palestinian state and publicly supports South Africa's claim before the International Court of Justice of the United Nations against Israel for the genocide of the Palestinian people.

29. Eliminate the transit visa requirement for people from countries in conflict such as Haiti, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Turkey and Cameroon, whose populations suffer serious human rights violations and are eligible for international protection.

30. Guarantee coherence between migration policy and the 2030 Agenda, the Climate Change Agenda, the Women's Rights Agenda, the Spanish Urban Agenda and the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees, ensuring a human rights, gender and intercultural approach in their implementation. To this end, Spain must promote a policy of cooperation with third countries focused on human development, which in no case instrumentalises official development aid for the purpose of containing migration, as well as ensuring that its actions abroad and the international activities of Spanish companies do not put human rights advocates at risk.



We present our *22nd Annual Report*. We are once again shocked by the figures for forced displacement globally, which continue to surpass historical records, with more than 110 million people forced to flee their homes in 2023 (...) as a result of serious human rights violations, environmental disasters, economic crises, and conflict and violence.

This year we turn our attention not only to the suffering of the Palestinian people under Israel's brutal military offensive (...) We remember still recent wars such as the one in Ukraine, more protracted ones such as the war in Syria, or the start of a new armed conflict in Sudan (...) We also analyse how climate change and environmental degradation in the Global South exacerbate inequalities and violence in places like Colombia or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

(...) We highlight how the persistent lack of safe and legal channels has claimed the lives of more than 4,064 people on the Mediterranean and Atlantic routes, an appalling situation to which the recent approval of the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum does not provide a solution. This pact, far from dealing with the shortcomings and lack of solidarity that prevent the construction of a true Common European Asylum System, implies new risks in terms of protection of people, deepens the approach of externalisation of borders and threatens the respect of human rights.

The situation at the Southern Border was marked by an 80 % increase in arrivals in 2023, especially by sea (...) Whether it was the unprecedented reactivation of the deadly Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, fluctuations in maritime routes to the coasts of Andalusia and the Balearic Islands, or the decrease in arrivals in Ceuta and Melilla, the challenges of the humanitarian and protection response to a complex and urgent reality were manifold.

The lack of appointments available to apply for asylum is a problem that remains unresolved, leaving thousands of people for months in a situation of serious lack of protection (...) It is urgent to eliminate barriers and discrimination in access to economic, social and cultural rights in order to guarantee a dignified life and social inclusion for all people.

From the prologue by Carlos Berzosa,

CEAR President

