



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya
To the United Nations, New York
Security Council - 2021-2022

PRESS RELEASE ON THE VIOLENCE AGAINST MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES TRYING
TO ENTER THE SPANISH ENCLAVE OF MELILLA

29 JUNE 2022

Last Friday was a sad day for many families. In one shattering instant, young and hopeful Africans were subjected to gruesome brutality by security forces as they sought to enter the Spanish enclave of Melilla.

Today, at Kenya's request, the Security Council was briefed on the incident in Melilla. We called for it so that the Council could receive the facts. And to invite the Security Council to call for the humane treatment Africans and people of African descent, as a matter of right.

It is also to urge the Security Council to recognise and act on the need for security of Africans who are fleeing wars and insecurity in their countries.

Exactly two years ago, the Human Rights Council adopted the resolution on the "Promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Africans and people of African descent against excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers".

What happened to the migrants trying to enter the Spanish enclave of Melilla is a blatant violation of this resolution. Rather than being protected, they were assaulted.

Tragically, this was not an isolated incident. It is part of a worrying trend in recent years in which people of African descent travelling to Europe via the Mediterranean suffer extreme violations of their human rights. Thousands have died, thousands of others have been sold into slavery, and many more have been violently assaulted.

The young Africans undertaking this journey are doing so for different reasons. Some are economic migrants trying to survive from livelihoods that have been destroyed by the effects of climate change.

Others are fleeing the foreign fighters and weapons that poured out of Libya following the intervention that the Security Council authorised in 2011. There are those fleeing from terrorist groups in the Sahel that have been sanctioned by the Council and that are engaged in battle with a peacekeeping force.

We have observed the Security Council and its members show great concern about the fate of refugees from other conflicts. The latest and most dramatic instance being the result of the war in Ukraine. We believe that Africans fleeing the wars and insecurity in their countries deserve equal levels of regard.

As we have done before, Kenya strongly condemns the mistreatment of all migrants and refugees wherever they may be. We reiterate our call for the promotion and protection of the rights of the people of African descent by all countries, without exception.

We echo the call by the African Union Commission Chairperson and other leaders in calling for thorough investigations by the relevant authorities into the incident at the Spanish enclave of Melilla, with a view to holding to account all those responsible.

The international community has the responsibility to ensure that all migrants and refugees are treated humanely and with dignity irrespective of their origin, race, religion or country or region of origin.

We have witnessed what the international community is capable of when it is truly mobilised by a course. We hope to see not just a condemnation of what happened in the Spanish enclave of Melilla, but more importantly, practical measures to ensure that such acts do not happen again - anywhere.

In this regard, and in line with Security Council Presidential statement of 7 December 2017(S/PRST/2017/24), we underscore the need for “coordination of efforts to tackle the root causes of large movements of people, including forced displacement, unmanaged migration and trafficking in persons, in a comprehensive and holistic manner, to prevent exploitation of refugees and migrants by smugglers and human traffickers, as well as for implementation of the 2030 agenda”.

This delegation would like to remind that New York City, where we sit, has welcomed hundreds of thousands of European migrants.

Their reception is reflected in the words of Emma Lazarus, “*Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.*” That this happened hundreds of years ago does not obviate the essential point that migration and seeking refuge are what it is to be human.

We urge the European Union and the African Union to take every effort to ensure that movement to Europe, for multiple reasons, some having to do with its history with Africa, is safe and dignified.

We strongly urge the countries on the Mediterranean, through which African migrants and refugees travel, to protect them in line with international obligations.

To the families of those killed last Friday, we offer our deepest condolences.