

CEUTA AND THE CLOUDS OVER THE “ISLAND”

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The smell of ferry and misfired petrol welcome me to Ceuta, that strategic pene-exclave of the former Spanish colonial force, whose long metal frontier seeps grey clouds and cold, daily guests of this peculiar military village. ‘And what’s that?’ the customs officer asks me curiously as she rummages in my rucksack. ‘Well, **a Soviet Union camera**,’ I answer. ‘How much did you pay for it?’ she continues with curious suspicion.

She smiles and lets me pass. It does not take me long **to find humanity again in a place designated to annihilate it**.

Ceuta is the territorial continuation of the Moroccan coast in all spheres, from the religious to the social one. The **muezzins still chant five times a day**, the rubbish falls without gravity from the hillsides and the traffic emits black fumes from long-ago expired vehicle inspections.

The centre, it must be said, is a quick glimpse **of any peninsular high street** with its strictly Inditex shops, terraces, tapas, perfumes, lottery and a relaxed but heartfelt feeling of national pride, a sudden and ephemeral appearance that vanishes as quickly as it began.

Minors living on the streets

Five minutes away from the main street **we meet some underage children, all Moroccans, who have escaped from the centre** for unaccompanied minors and prefer to live out on the street. ‘We sleep up there’, they say proudly, pointing to the roof of a petrol station. To get there, they risk their necks every day juggling with barbed wire and considerable heights. A local policeman speaks to the boys in Arabic, not bothering to hide his palpable contempt for them.

‘If it were up to me, I’d send them back to Morocco’, he comments without middle ways, criticising the institutions that try to regularise and shelter underage children. ‘Some time ago, some of them died trying to get on to that petrol station’. ‘We were better off with Franco’, concludes the character of this pathetic anachronistic theatre with his punch line. Not to mention that he probably was not even alive at the time of the dictator.

‘**I don’t like being in the centre for unaccompanied minors**’, says a boy, when he is being given a pair of new socks. With almost virile pride, he shows me several deep cuts on his right shoulder. ‘A guard offended my mother, and we fought, I don’t want to go back’.

The centre, on the other hand, **means guaranteed food and health and bureaucratic security for many kids**. There are more than 300 boys in the centres, and we estimate that more than 30 are living out on the streets.

It is very difficult to be sure about the real age of these boys, but I am surprised to see a couple who seem not even 9 years old, two opposite archetypes moulded in the hard street survival among ‘adults’: one has the character of a leader and the other of a protégé.

The latter, with shame, tells us that he cannot sleep because of severe pain in his urethra, but he doesn’t trust in going to the emergency room, i.e. **back to the centre for unaccompanied minors**. Harshness is written all over the vigorous faces of the fake adults. Only rarely is there a tender hint of their real age. They are children, after all, even if they try to bury their childhood just to survive.

One day, **a half-boss of the group, a tough and imperious character, helped us to stick some posters** with the tape and, surprisingly, the slow dedication to the simple mission turned into a game of extreme tidiness and attention – cutting the tape, sticking it meticulously without folds and observing, almost to the limit of obsessive-compulsive disorder, the correctness of the operation. Outside the Lidl supermarket, one of the busiest meeting points, some local women watch us, surrounded by street children: ‘They must be from some NGO’, they say, talking among themselves, **focusing only on our presence and completely ignoring that of the children.**

We were the odd thing there. The homeless children are now part of the scenography of this contradictory city.

If they manage **to stay in the centre for unaccompanied minors until they come of age, there is a good chance of speeding up the temporary residence** procedure. M. entered with his family before Covid – ‘leave me here, I’ll manage somehow’, he told his parents, who crossed back to Morocco, leaving behind the fence a son, and two nations that were to cool their diplomatic relationship. When M. reached 18, nobody informed him that he had obtained temporary residency, which allowed him to legally cross to the mainland.

After the three months of validity, **reapplying for a new residency is more than difficult; it is almost impossible.** In fact, the government requires for this procedure that the applicant has an income and health insurance, which are difficult to obtain if one does not have residency. A vicious circle that can be bypassed by entering the CETI, the centre for foreigners that lets in sub-Saharanans but usually rejects Moroccans.

More obstacles than solutions

Are there levels of privilege within the migrant community? And, **is there a need to remember this, or does highlighting it create more obstacles than solutions?** We have all recently become aware of the difference between a first-class migrant and a second-class migrant, distinguishing (racially) a Ukrainian from a sub-Saharan, a Maghrebi or a Syrian. The greater consideration given to one group directly harms the others, rendering them invisible and highlighting even further their “otherness”. But, in the case of Ceuta, **is this imperfect difference in human rights also experienced?** Are unequal preferences dictated by politics or by society as a whole important? It is sad to confirm the theory, but here too, the Others have levels of priority according to their origin, both in the associative and administrative spheres.

‘It is better not to mix Moroccans with sub-Saharanans. It’s sad, but we have tried it many times and it doesn’t work’, says an activist, detailing the causes. The deep cultural differences and the disparate and incompatible characters harm young Moroccans, condemned a priori with the stigma of not wanting to integrate into a complex system that, in the end, **disadvantages them compared to all other migrants trapped in the limbo of Ceuta.**

In fact, the CETI, which should welcome all types of migrants, regardless of their nationality, in practice limits itself to protecting only sub-Saharan Africans, **under the protection of unwritten policies and unofficial directives.**

In the CETI, temporary residence procedures are slow but safe and, if they are extra lucky, they can be transferred to a CETI on the mainland for reasons of space or internal organisation and thus, leave the legendary hell of a hostile island-city.

Another paradigmatic case is that of S., a young woman of Moroccan origin born in Ceuta who, at the age of 18, **still has neither a passport nor Spanish nationality.** Given that the Spanish state legislation still has the archaic ius sanguinis (direct inheritance of nationality from parents to children), S. is paradoxically unable to live a normal life as a Spanish citizen, despite having gone to school and having lived her whole life in the enclave.

Everything is pretty slow in Ceuta and the achievements in judicial matters are not so many as expected. Nevertheless, we don’t allow the others to become invisible; that urban furniture that, legally or illegally, will cross the sea and forget about this cloudy limbo.

CEUTA DENIES PEOPLE THE POSSIBILITY TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM

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By No Name Kitchen Ceuta and Solidary Wheels / Photos Eduardo Oyana

One of the most disturbing facts that we are observing in Ceuta in recent weeks is **the impossibility of obtaining an appointment to submit an asylum application**. On the online platform for requesting an appointment, applicants are informed that “there are no appointments available”, without establishing a timeframe in which the appointment can be obtained.

Furthermore, neither the online nor the face-to-face channels offer the possibility of obtaining proof that the applicant has tried to obtain the appointment and has not been able to do so for reasons beyond their responsibility. In other words, they do not have a **receipt of their manifestation of willingness to apply for asylum**. The institutions argue that this is due to technical reasons, but we at No Name Kitchen observe that these are political reasons to allow fewer people to obtain a document that would give them a certain degree of protection, and this leaves many people unprotected.

*This leaves many people unprotected and unable to return to their country because **they would put themselves in danger**, but at the same time trapped in Ceuta without any protection against possible deportation to Morocco, the city's neighbouring country.*

Denial of an inherent right of human beings

Asylum is an **international right inherent to all human beings, without distinction**.

Specifically, [Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) recognises such a right:

“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”.

Spanish legislation also regulates the right to asylum and subsidiary protection recognised in the Constitution. [Law 12/2009, of 30 October](#), regulating the right to asylum and subsidiary protection, in accordance with the provisions of Article 13(4) of the Constitution, **aims to establish the terms under which non-EU nationals and stateless persons may enjoy in Spain** the international protection constituted by the right to asylum and subsidiary protection, as well as the content of such international protection. Today, in Ceuta, the right to asylum is being denied with this practice, a practice that is completely contrary to the law.

There is **no institution or support in the city of Ceuta** (apart from the centres for minors and the CETI) that provides legal advice to people who wish to seek asylum. And many people, because of their age or nationality, are left out of the CETI or the centres for minors.

Specifically, **we are witnessing that adults born in Morocco have been denied entry to CETI for arbitrary reasons**, and many of the cases we are collecting have come after the agreement that Spain and Morocco signed in May on migration issues, which is having various consequences, in addition to the extreme violence at the border, as we have already seen in Melilla this June.

Every public administration must follow the policies defined by the European Union and has an obligation to integrate migrants and applicants for international protection. The UN, on its part, **is committed to protecting the security, dignity and human rights** and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status.

What No Name Kitchen does in Ceuta

One of the most important tasks of No Name Kitchen (NNK) in Ceuta is to offer legal accompaniment, working together with people, so that they can make their rights effective and/or migrate safely, **as everyone has the right to move freely** and to choose their residence. And with this, No Name Kitchen, in collaboration with Solidary Wheels from Melilla, assists migrants **and applicants for international protection** with special attention to those who are in a situation of vulnerability and are at greater risk of human rights violations.

SITUATION IN CEUTA

11.10.2022

In the Spanish city of Ceuta, one of the gateways to Spain from Morocco, **violations of migrants' rights continue to be the daily routine**. In the first half of the year, the agreement between the Spanish and Moroccan governments has reinforced the externalisation of the borders more than ever and the European Union sent the Rabat government 500 million euros to keep people out of EU borders at all costs, shortly after the massacre in Melilla. The border between the two countries reopened after more than two years of closure **due to the pandemic, but with more restrictions than ever before**, leaving many people who used to come from neighbouring towns to Ceuta without what was their economic activity and income.

Meanwhile, **in Ceuta we find many minors living out on the streets**. Many of them claim that they would rather be sleeping on the streets than in the centres for minors set up for their protection. In Ceuta, as well as providing health treatment and clean clothes, we have a legal team with lawyers. Every day we make rounds through the city to visit these children, create spaces of care and trust where we can share the situation, remind them of their rights and let these people know that if they want to denounce a violation of these rights, we will accompany them in the process.

We also **support adults or people who have just reached the legal age of 18 to obtain documentation that will allow them to have more rights** and freedom of movement. Ceuta, for the European Union, separated from the mainland by a dangerous sea, represents one more border and there are legal obstacles that people face preventing them from crossing easily from here to the rest of Spain.

NNK ACTIONS

No Name Kitchen (NNK) has adapted the routine to the extreme hot weather in Bosnia, Serbia, Greece and Spain to continue the threefold action plan:

- 1. Health on the move*
- 2. Distribution of Food and NFIs*
- 3. Advocacy to stop the violence.*

One of the measures has been splitting distributions in two shifts, early in the morning and late in the evening. Morning distributions are carried out by two members of the team who visit, **not only the people who have asked for NFIs (Non-food Items, like clothes or shoes) through our hotline**, but also all the other locations where our support is reaching.

The morning assessments are useful to check on a daily basis how people are, if they need medical assistance or showers, vouchers, to collect new NFIs orders or just to spend time together in solidarity. Furthermore the teams on the field can have a very clear overview of the situation, even in a period where the turnover of PoM is very high. Thank you to this knowledge, empty squats are cleaned in depth and 20 liter canisters of drinking water and dry food are left inside. This **is particularly necessary for people who are pushed-back during the night**.

Our voucher program – a system of codes with whom people on the move **can freely decide what to buy in different supermarkets of the area** – has been expanded to northwest of Bosnia (Vrnograč) where currently the numbers of PoM have increased.

NNK has tried its best to provide PoM with means for their self-protection in an effort to generate a collective community of care. **NNK is helping to cope with the pain and the struggle of people's journeys** by standing together in solidarity and an active listening and empathy is performed daily on the field. Even though it cannot be numerated, this constitutes a key element in NNK's practice and it should be in the center of the conversation.

NUMBERS DON'T SHOW EVERYTHING, BUT GIVE A CLUE

First half of 2022 in numbers

SOME STORIES ARE THE BEST REPORT

- Post about family from Burundi traveling with a 2 year old kid stating how they have been pushed back twice already: <https://www.instagram.com/p/ChcjQxDNCkz/>
- Post about the death of Elahm, minor: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CgeipBGNGdm/>
- Photo-reporter Mónica Parra has recently published a book about the situation in the EU borders. A whole chapter is dedicated to NNK's history and current activities

WHAT'S COMING NEXT

- Expanding our base in Subotica to cover more people in Horgos and Majdan, with special attention in hot showers and shelter for the upcoming winter.
- Assessment in northeast Bosnia, around Gradiska area, where some groups of PoM are setting makeshift camps trying to reach Croatia through this new crossing spot.
- Settle our Legal service in Ceuta with a lawyer hired by NNK living in the city
- Strengthening the work with legal clinics from Italy and Germany, to systematize better the kind of information requested by PoM, and identifying clinics from other countries.
- Launch a winterization campaign to collect resources for distributions during winter, focusing in firewood, sleeping bags and kitchenware.