

Spain: Over 500 African Migrants Rescued in the Mediterranean

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More than **500 migrants** were rescued by **Spanish authorities**, in the Mediterranean, over a two-day period, from **17 boats** – three of which eventually sank. According to Reuters, the migrants hailed from **North and sub-Saharan African** countries.

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About **300 individuals** were picked up on **nine boats** on Saturday and another **250** were rescued from **eight vessels** on Sunday. **Last August**, Spanish authorities came to the aid of **593 people** – including 35 children and a baby – traveling on 15 small paddle boats in one day.

The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** has warned that Spain appears to be facing “another very challenging year” regarding helping and protecting migrants.

“This situation requires urgent measures from the central government, which needs to coordinate with the relevant ministries as well as the Guardia Civil border police, the maritime rescue service, the police and NGOs,” Maria Jesus Vega, a spokeswoman for UNHCR Spain, said.

“The solution to irregular immigration is necessarily a matter of creating opportunities in countries of origin and working to improve the paths of legal migration,” a spokesman for the interior ministry had explained in January.

The number of people crossing into Spain, from North Africa, has increased significantly in recent years while arrivals to Italy and Greece via Libya have dropped. At least **19,000 people** arrived in Spain in 2017 – a **182 percent** increase on the previous year.

International Organization for Migration, 6,872 people have been rescued – and 218 other died – while trying to enter Spain, by sea, since the year began.
