

SPANISH NATIONAL POLICE BREAK UP RING SMUGGLING IRANIANS TO THE UK, SUPPORTED BY EUROPOL

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[Press Release](#)



The Spanish National Police, with support from the UK's Immigration Enforcement, the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service (SEF), and Europol, have dismantled an international criminal network involved in smuggling Iranian nationals into the UK on commercial flights. The network operated from the city of Málaga in southern Spain and used Spain as a transit country. The organisation charged each migrant around EUR 25 000 for supplying fake Spanish passports, travel documents, transfers to and accommodation in their final destinations.

In total, 101 individuals were arrested. The Spanish National Police arrested 14 members of the criminal group in Málaga (Spain), as well as another 42 individuals accused of selling their Spanish documents to the members of the organisation for prices ranging from EUR 500 to EUR 3000. Another 44 individuals of Iranian nationality were intercepted at different European airports carrying forged passports. The leader of the criminal group was arrested by the Metropolitan Police at London's Heathrow airport, after a European Arrest Warrant (EAW) was issued by the Spanish authorities. The suspect intended to take a flight to Brazil to evade justice.

Europol assisted the investigations by providing analytical support and organising various operational meetings at its headquarters in The Hague. On the action day, an expert from Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre was deployed to Málaga to support the actions on the spot.

This allowed for real-time information exchange and cross-checks against Europol's databases.

The Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) played an important role in supporting the investigations by exchanging information, participating in operational meetings held at Europol, and arresting various suspects in Portugal. On the action day, 4 SEF experts were deployed to Málaga to provide active support during the house searches.

During the searches in Spain, seven Iranian individuals were identified, including a 5-year-old minor. Police seized various evidence, including authentic passports (30 Iranian and 10 Spanish), computers, printers, more than 400 blank ID cards, various firearms, EUR 1300 in cash and a high-end vehicle.

The investigation began a year ago, after seven Iranians were caught trying to catch a flight from Hamburg (Germany) to the United Kingdom carrying forged and authentic passports, most of them Spanish. Investigations revealed that the flight tickets had been purchased through a travel agency based in Málaga (Spain). Further enquiries led to the discovery of a migrant smuggling network operating in the city.

The criminal group was perfectly structured and each member had a defined role, ranging from recruiting the irregular migrants in their country of origin, to facilitating the transfers, hosting them in safe houses in Spain, and supplying the travel documents.

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