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What's behind US Representative Massie's claims over crisis at Ceuta?

Figures such as Representative Thomas Massie have questioned whether crisis is related to US support for Morocco.

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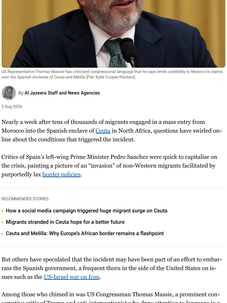

US Representative Thomas Massie has criticised congressional language that he says lends credibility to Morocco's claims over the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla [File: Kyle Cooper/Reuters]

By Al Jazeera Staff and News Agencies

5 Aug 2026

Nearly a week after tens of thousands of migrants engaged in a mass entry from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in North Africa, questions have swirled online about the conditions that triggered the incident.

Critics of Spain's left-wing Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez were quick to capitalise on the crisis, painting a picture of an "invasion" of non-Western migrants facilitated by purportedly lax border policies.

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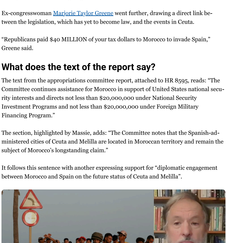
But others have speculated that the incident may have been part of an effort to embarrass the Spanish government, a frequent thorn in the side of the United States on issues such as the US-Israel war on Iran.

Among those who chimed in was US Congressman Thomas Massie, a prominent conservative critic of Trump and anti-interventionist who drew attention to language in a recent congressional report that seemed to favour Morocco's territorial claims over the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

While Morocco has drawn closer to the US and Israel in recent years, speculation that the events in Ceuta were part of a planned effort remains, for the moment, largely circumstantial.

What is driving speculation about events in Ceuta, what has been said by figures like Massie, and what do we know so far?



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What did Massie say?

Representative Massie shared a social media post several days after the incident, drawing a line between the events in Ceuta and a House appropriations committee report attached to a bill, HR 8595.

The bill, a wide-ranging piece of legislation largely focused on national security, was passed in the US House of Representatives but has yet to pass the Senate.

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Massie focused on language regarding territorial disputes between Morocco and Spain over Melilla and Ceuta, which appears in the committee report but not the bill itself, suggesting that it mirrors Morocco's own rhetoric. The report also recommends cutting $40m in US security assistance for Morocco.

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"GOP Congress voted to give Morocco $40 mil and lent credibility to their claim to Ceuta," Massie said on August 3.

Ex-congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene went further, drawing a direct link between the legislation, which has yet to become law, and the events in Ceuta.

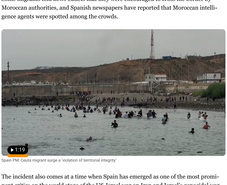
"Republicans paid $40 MILLION of your tax dollars to Morocco to invade Spain," Greene said.

What does the text of the report say?

The text from the appropriations committee report, attached to HR 8595, reads: "The Committee continues assistance for Morocco in support of United States national security interests and directs not less than $20,000,000 under National Security Investment Programs and not less than $20,000,000 under Foreign Military Financing Program."

The section, highlighted by Massie, adds: "The Committee notes that the Spanish-administered cities of Ceuta and Melilla are located in Moroccan territory and remain the subject of Morocco's longstanding claim."

It follows this sentence with another expressing support for "diplomatic engagement between Morocco and Spain on the future status of Ceuta and Melilla".



Morocco using migration to pressure Spain over Ceuta: Stephen Zunes

Why are Massie and Greene focusing on this?

Both Massie and Greene have become prominent figures on the political right, known for their increasingly critical views of President Trump and his overseas interventionist policies.

Greene, once one of Trump's fiercest supporters, announced in November that she would resign her seat in Congress after becoming frustrated with the direction of Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement on questions such as support for Israel and the handling of the Epstein files.

While Massie was defeated in a congressional primary by a Trump-backed opponent and Greene resigned from her seat, both have carved out a niche on the political right, along with figures such as Joe Kent and Tucker Carlson, for those disillusioned with the direction of Trump's second term.

What else is being said about Ceuta?

While Massie and Greene have focused on the connection between the language in the committee report and the influx of migrants in Ceuta, they are not alone in speculating whether the crisis may have been connected to geopolitics.

Morocco has strengthened ties with Israel and the US in recent years. During Trump's first term in office, Morocco joined the Abraham Accords in 2020, and the US recognised Morocco's contested territorial claim to Western Sahara.

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Some migrants told news outlets that they were encouraged to cross the border by Moroccan authorities, and Spanish newspapers have reported that Moroccan intelligence agents were spotted among the crowds.

Spain PM Ceuta migrant surge a 'violation of territorial integrity'

The incident also comes at a time when Spain has emerged as one of the most prominent critics on the world stage of the US-Israel war on Iran and Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, and both the Trump administration and Israeli politicians were quick to capitalise on the crisis to slam the Sanchez government.

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