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HEALTH



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REFUGEE PLEAS

## Border angels

Gran Canaria played host to the founder of the non-profit organisation **Ángeles de La Frontera (Border Angels)** recently.

Mexican born Enrique Morones met with the island president Antonio Morales, and spoke about his work and aims at two schools and the University. He emphasised the need for more solidarity with refugees, wherever they are in the world. He underlined the sterling work carried out by Germany and Sweden during the latest refugee wave in Europe, but he underlined that: "All refugees are equally important and no country has really done a good job on this issue this last year. In 2016, around 8,000 people attempted to cross borders and about 5,000 lost their lives in European waters and around 1,000 on the border between Mexico and the USA".

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↑ **The Border Angel gives the Mexican/American border-dead a voice**

HEALTH LEGISLATION

# Stop transplant tourism

Spain has an enviable record as the country which has more organ donors per head of population than any other nation. Unfortunately, as in other areas, there are always those who will find ways to abuse generosity.

As Christians turn their thoughts to Easter, when according to their beliefs Jesus gave up his life to save the souls of mankind, organ donation is another form of altruism which can be considered, especially as with it even the most critical cases can have hopes of survival.

Canarian hospitals form an important part of the task force that allows Spain to head the tables. In Gran Canaria, the University Hospital specialises in kidney transplants, and in Tenerife, Nuestra Señora de Candelaria specialises in liver transplants, whilst the HUC in La Laguna has expertise in several areas, performing renal, pancreatic and double transplants of both organs and is expert in living donations for kidneys.



↑ **The lack of donors in other countries makes Spain attractive**

It isn't only young people who can donate. Since 2011, over half the donors have been over 60 years old, around a third over 70 and 10 per cent were over 80. The oldest liver transplant during this time came from a 94 year old. Unfortunately, there's always someone hanging on the tails of every success story. The National Police last year revealed six cases of social

insurance fraud by six Bulgarians. They had false employment contracts in Spain and were therefore able to get themselves onto the waiting list and operated for transplants which they would not have received in their own country. There have been similar cases with patients from other countries. It is, of course, understandable, but it cannot be allowed to continue.

Experts are worried that a wave of hundreds or even thousands of patients from other European countries could make their way to Spain to receive an organ. Even in Germany and the UK the number of donations does not meet the needs. The head of the National Organisation for Transplants (ONT) Rafael Matesanz warned: "We need a regulation on how long a patient must have lived in Spain in order to get on the waiting list for an organ transplant. The experts involved in the practice and the provincial governments agree on this point. But we must now close the gap at the political level". Matesanz has been at the head of the ONT for 28 years and emphasises that it isn't the emergency ops that crop up during a visitor's stay that are the problem, they are so rare as to be negligible, but there is a real risk that people are emigrating to Spain specifically to increase their chances of treatment.

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