

Migrants' journey to Europe turns deadly as boat capsizes in Mediterranean

At least 41 refugees and migrants have drowned with more than 70 others rescued by a commercial vessel that took them to Sicilian port town Porto Empedocle.



Migrants wearing lifejackets on a rubber dinghy are pictured during a rescue operation by the MSF-SOS Mediterranee run Ocean Viking rescue ship, off the coast of Libya in the Mediterranean Sea, February 18, 2020. Picture taken February 18, 2020. (Reuters)

At least 41 people have drowned over the weekend when their boat capsized in the Central Mediterranean, the UN said, the latest shipwreck involving migrants fleeing conflict-stricken Libya and seeking better life in Europe.

The UN migration and refugee agencies said in a joint statement that the dead were among at least 120 migrants on a dinghy that left Libya on February 18.

The shipwreck took place two days later, it said.

A commercial vessel rescued the survivors and took them to the Sicilian port town of Porto Empedocle in Italy, they added.

Only one body was recovered, and the missing included three children and four women, one of whom left behind a newborn baby currently in Lampedusa, it said.

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The shipwreck was the latest along the Central Mediterranean migration route, where about 160 Europe-bound migrants have died since the beginning of 2021, the UN agencies said.

In the years since the 2011 uprising that ousted and killed longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi, war-torn Libya has emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East.

Smugglers often pack desperate families into ill-equipped rubber boats that stall and founder along the perilous Central Mediterranean route.

Over the last several years, hundreds of thousands of migrants have reached Italy either on their own or after being rescued at sea.

Source: AP

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