

Italy Investigates Deaths of 26 Nigerian Women Migrants



Rome, November 8 (RHC)-- Italian prosecutors have initiated a probe into the deaths of 26 Nigerian women whose bodies were found in the Mediterranean sea. Most of the victims were teenagers aged between 14 and 18. Five migrants in the southern port city of Salerno are being questioned as investigators are suspicious that their involvement in the women's deaths was also preceded by sexual assault, according to the BBC.

A total of 375 migrants were rescued by the Spanish warship, Cantabria, which eventually docked in Salerno. Twenty-three of the dead women were recovered from a rubber boat carrying 64 other people, the BBC reported. Most of the survivors came from Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, Sudan and The Gambia, ninety of whom were women and 52 children. Eight of the women were pregnant. A smaller number of Libyan men and women were also aboard the migrant ship.

The Italian aid group, L'Abbraccio, has reported that human-smuggling rings charge each migrant upward of \$6,000 to make the dangerous journey from their home countries to Italy. In July, European and African ministers convened to develop a method aimed at stemming the flow of refugees fleeing Africa into European ports and limit the number of undocumented immigrants to 20,000. Ministers discussed tougher deportation strategies as well as how to break up human-trafficking gangs.

The plan, supported by the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, argued that training exercises by the Libyan

coastguard and the current procedures for the Italian NGO rescue ships operating in the Mediterranean are insufficient in deterring refugees. Instead, the meeting argued screening systems were needed for migrants coming from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Chad and Sudan.

Migration from Libya to Europe peaked after 2011, when the U.S. government toppled and murdered former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

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