

At least 89 migrants drown after boat capsizes off Mauritanian coast

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Nuakchot, July 5 (RHC)-- A migrants' boat has capsized off the coast of Mauritania, leaving at least 89 migrants dead. According to news reports from Nuakchot, the Mauritanian capital, the vessel was headed to Europe earlier this week when it sank offshore, leaving at least 89 migrants dead.

Mauritania's state news agency and a senior local government official said on Thursday: "The Mauritanian Coast Guard recovered the bodies of 89 people aboard a large traditional fishing boat that capsized on Monday, July 1 on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean," the state news agency said. It added dozens more were still missing after the boat sank offshore some four kilometers from the country's south-west city of Ndiago.

The news agency quoted the migrant boat survivors saying the vessel had set sail from the border of Senegal and Gambia with 170 passengers on board, bringing the number of missing to 72.

Nine people had been rescued by the coastguard till now, the state news agency added. One of the survivors was a five-year-old girl. The official, who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity, confirmed the state agency's report.

Due to the strict anti-migrant controls in the Mediterranean Sea, human traffickers from Africa have resorted to using the Atlantic Ocean route to smuggle people to Europe. The route is particularly dangerous due to the strong currents along the way. Also, the migrants are often piled onto overloaded, sometimes unseaworthy boats without enough drinking water and supplies for the journey.

In 2023, the number of asylum seekers landing on Spain's Canary Islands reached almost a record 40,000 people, more than double the 2022 number, according to the Spanish government.

The Canary Islands is 100 km from the nearest coast of Northwest Africa. However, many of the migrants' boats set sail from farther places and ports along the coast of Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Gambia and Senegal.

In the first five months of 2024, according to Spanish charity organization Caminando Fronteras, more than 5,000 asylum seekers have died en route to Spain by sea.

Numerous individuals seeking asylum, often escaping from situations of conflict, oppression, or persecution, travel to Western countries in hopes of finding improved living standards and chances for economic advancement.

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