

# *Forty Bodies Found on Migrant Boat Off Libya*

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Stockholm, August 27 (RHC)-- The bodies of around 40 people have been discovered in the hold of a troubled migrant boat in the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast, the Swedish coastguard says.

Mattias Lindholm, a Swedish coastguard spokesman, told AFP on that the bodies were found after Swedish ship the Poseidon was deployed to the region to help the stricken wooden vessel. Lindholm said that the Poseidon also saved 439 people during its operation in the Mediterranean.

"Unfortunately, there were around 40 people dead in the hold," he said, adding, "The bodies are currently being transferred to the Poseidon." The Swedish ship was sent to the troubled area as part of the European Union's maritime rescue mission Triton.

Meanwhile, Italy's coastguard said that at least 10 migrant boats had issued distress calls, while at least 2,000 migrants, or "probably more," were in danger. The Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), a Malta-based private organization, also said in a tweet that its boat, the Phoenix, was taking part in a rescue operation in the region along Italian and Swedish vessels.

In another development, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that almost 300,000 people have crossed the Mediterranean this year. Joel Millman, of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an intergovernmental organization, also said recently that at least 2,373 migrants

have died crossing the Mediterranean this year, up nearly by 300 when compared to the figures recorded over the same period last year.

Most of the refugees who risk their lives to reach Europe are reportedly fleeing conflict-hit zones in Africa and the Middle East. In June, the EU launched the first phase of a military operation in the Mediterranean to curb human trafficking, dubbed EU NAVFOR Med, involving five warships, two submarines, three maritime patrol aircraft, drones and helicopters.

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