

# *12 die as refugee boat sinks off western Turkey*

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Ankara, June 18 (RHC)-- Twelve people have been killed after a dinghy carrying refugees sank off Turkey's western coast, the Turkish coast guard says, adding that 31 others had been rescued. Search and rescue operations were launched by the coast guard to reach the passengers of the boat, which sunk off the coast of the Bodrum district in the Mugla province.

The coast guard said in a statement that the operations, carried out by two boats, a diving team and a helicopter, had found the bodies of 12 people from the sunken boat at around 32 meters deep in the sea. The search and rescue operations are continuing.

Turkey became one of the main launch points for refugees taking the sea route to European Union territory in 2015, many fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East and Africa. The movement was drastically curtailed by a 2016 accord between Ankara and the EU.

The Turkish coast guard's website reports that at least 16 people described as "irregular migrants" have died so far this year in the seas off Turkey.



**Radio Habana Cuba**