

Children among 45 dead in 2020's worst Mediterranean boat tragedy



Tripoli, August 19 (RHC)-- At least 45 people including five children died earlier this week in the worst shipwreck reported so far this year off Libya's coast, according to the United Nations.

In a joint statement released on Wednesday, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) said 37 survivors from Monday's shipwreck reported that at least 45 others had died when the engine of the vessel they were aboard exploded off the coast of Zwara.

The two agencies said the survivors, mostly from Senegal, Mali, Chad and Ghana, were rescued by local fishermen and later detained upon disembarkation. Following the tragic incident in the Mediterranean, the UNHCR and the IOM urgently called for a review of countries' approach in their rescue efforts.

"There remains an absence of any dedicated, EU-led search and rescue programme," Federico Soda, head of the IOM's mission in Libya, said on Twitter.

"We fear that without an urgent increase in SaR capacity, there is a risk of more disasters," he added, referring to the search and rescue activities by the coastguards of countries in the Mediterranean.

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