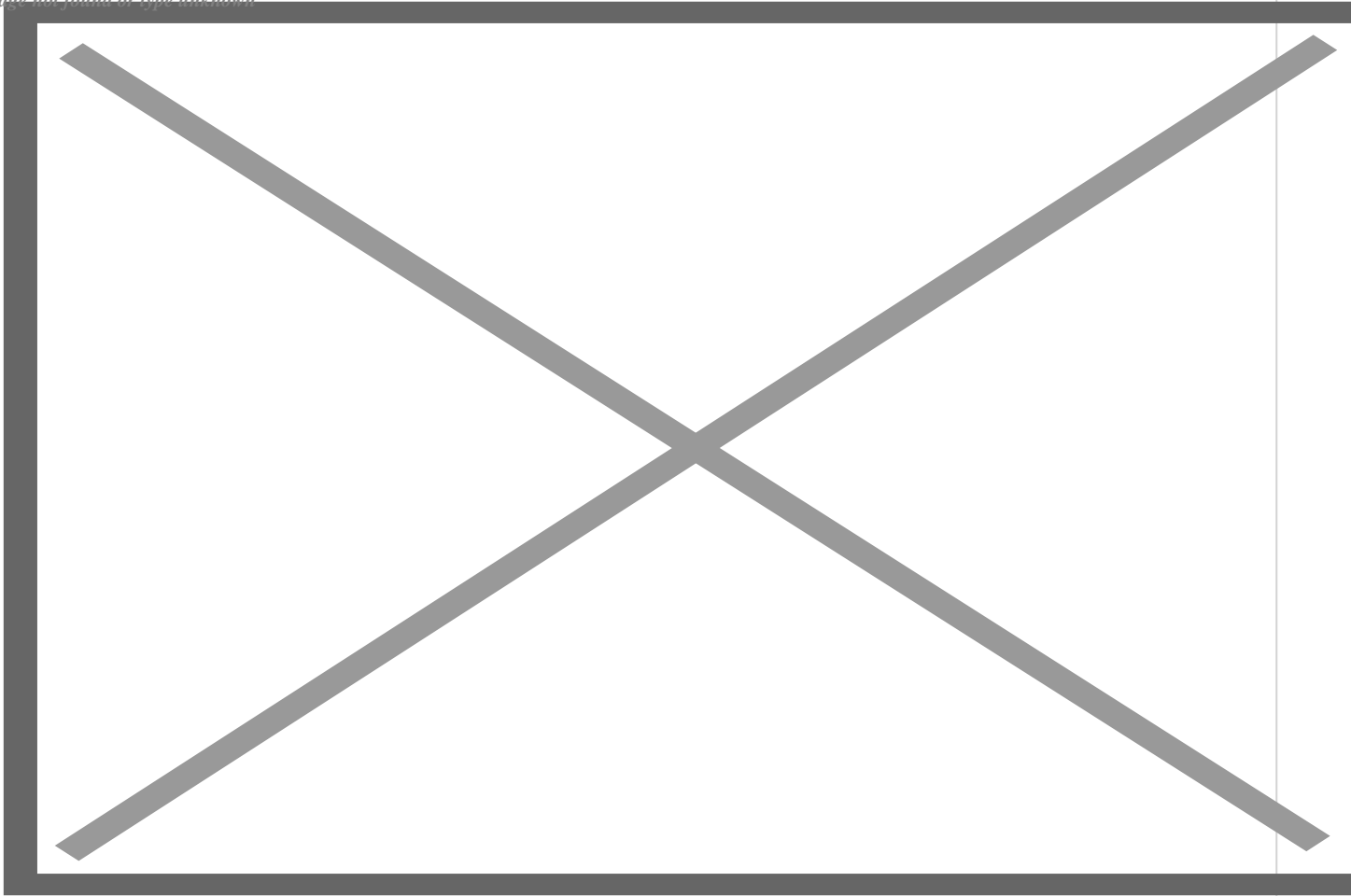


Dozens of migrants seek refuge on Mediterranean oil rig

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Rescuers say 65-70 people clinging to a Shell oil platform in the Mediterranean

Tunis, January 5 (RHC)-- Up to 70 migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean have taken refuge on an oil platform before being handed over to Tunisian authorities, energy giant Shell and a rescue charity have said.

Rescue ship Louise Michel announced in a statement on Tuesday it had rescued 31 people from a drifting wooden boat in poor weather while "another 65-70 people have been holding out all night on the Shell oil platform" onto which they had climbed.

Shell in Tunisia confirmed that an unspecified number of migrants had reached its Miskar platform, located approximately 120 km (75 miles) off the coast of Tunisia, at 8pm Tunis time (19:00 GMT) on Monday. “The migrants were assisted and provided with water, food and dry clothes,” the company said, adding that it had informed the Tunisian authorities. “The migrants were since safely transferred to the Tunisian Navy vessel on January 4, 2022 at around 2pm Tunis time.”

The Louise Michel is a 30-metre (98-foot) former French navy vessel decorated by elusive British artist Banksy, one of its sponsors. It is one of several rescue ships operating in the Mediterranean, as tens of thousands of migrants try to reach Europe each year, often in leaky and overcrowded boats.

It is not unusual for some of those stranded to seek refuge on offshore oil platforms, although operators warn it can be dangerous. More than 115,000 people arrived by sea in Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta last year, while approximately 1,800 died or went missing, according to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR).

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