

# *Mediterranean ships recover five bodies, rescue over 1,100 refugees*



**Crew from the Sea-Watch 3 distribute life jackets to 108 people in a boat in distress in the central Mediterranean [Nora Boerding/Sea-Watch via AP Photo]**

Rome, July 25 (RHC)-- There have been a series of rescues in recent days in the central Mediterranean, the Italian coast guard says, as desperate people seek a better life in Europe.

Italian vessels have recovered five bodies and rescued 674 people packed on a fishing boat adrift in the Mediterranean off the Libyan coast, the Italian Coast Guard has said, while European charities reported saving more than 500 refugees in other operations.

Some of the survivors had to be plucked from the sea in the Italian operation on Saturday 118 miles (190km) off the coast of Calabria by a Navy mercantile ship, three Coast Guard patrol boats and a financial police boat. All of those rescued were brought to ports in Calabria and Sicily.

The Coast Guard said on Sunday it was just one in a series of rescues in recent days in the Italian search and rescue area of the central Mediterranean, as desperate people fleeing poverty or oppression seek a better life in Europe.

In one case, a helicopter was called to evacuate a woman in need of medical treatment from a migrant boat in a precarious condition, the Coast Guard said. In separate operations, the German charity Sea-Watch said it rescued 444 refugees trying to cross the Mediterranean on overcrowded, rickety smugglers' boats. The Sea-Watch 3 vessel carried out the five operations over 24 hours, and said the rescued included a pregnant woman and a man who had suffered severe burns.

The charity is asking for permission to bring the rescued people to a safe port, as the rescue ship is unable to accommodate so many people.

Hannah Wallace Bowman, head of mission and search and rescue coordinator at Sea-Watch, told Al Jazeera that the group consistently experiences "a lack of coordination and assistance at the European level for those seeking safety" in the central Mediterranean.

"We will be appealing directly to the closest port of safety, for us that would be Malta and Italy, in order that we can disembark the people as soon as possible," Wallace Bowman said. "We're kind of like a floating ambulance – we can provide an emergency response, we can stabilise people for a short period of time, but this is only a very short-term solution."

In addition, the European charity SOS Mediterranee said its rescue ship Ocean Viking has saved 87 people, including 57 unaccompanied minors, from an overcrowded rubber boat off the Libyan coast. None had life jackets, the charity said.

Refugee arrivals in Italy are up by nearly one quarter from 2021, with 34,013 recorded through Friday. While still notably fewer than the 2015 peak year, the crossings remain deadly, with 1,234 people recorded dead or missing at sea by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees this year, 823 of those in the perilous central Mediterranean.

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