

At least four people dead after boat capsizes in English Channel



At least 4 dead and dozens of others rescued after a boat capsizes in the English Channel, UK media reports.

London, December 14 (RHC)-- At least four people are dead after an incident involving a small boat in the English Channel between Britain and France, the British government has said. According to British media reports, dozens of people were rescued after a small boat capsized in the icy water off the British coast on Wednesday. British radio station LBC reported that 43 people had been rescued.

The vessel reportedly sank while trying to cross the English Channel, with at least 50 refugees and asylum seekers believed to be on board. Despite freezing temperatures, more than 500 asylum seekers have made the perilous journey in small boats since Sunday alone, with the people traffickers who organise the crossings taking advantage of low winds and calm seas.

“At 0305 (GMT) today, authorities were alerted to an incident in the Channel concerning a migrant small boat in distress,” a government spokesperson said in a statement on Wednesday. “After a coordinated search and rescue operation led by HM Coastguard, it is with regret that there have been four confirmed deaths as a result of this incident, investigations are ongoing and we will provide further information in due course.”

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency said the rescue operation involved the British and French navies, the UK’s Border Force, police, air ambulances and other emergency responders. Ambulances and emergency crews had gathered on the quayside at the port of Dover. Sky News said some people had been transferred to a hospital in Ashford, Kent, but it was not known if they were survivors or fatalities.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak expressed sorrow at the “tragic loss of human life.” “Our hearts go out to all those affected and our tributes to those involved in the extensive rescue operation.”

The news was swiftly condemned by several charities and NGOs, including Freedom from Torture. “What happened in the Channel this morning is a tragedy of this government’s own making,” it said on Twitter. “How many people have to lose their lives before this government starts treating refugees like human beings?” it added.

Refugees and asylum seekers have previously been intercepted crossing one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes on inflatable dinghies ill-suited for trips on the open sea. More than 40,000 have arrived from France this year, many having made the desperate journey from Afghanistan or Iran to travel across Europe and on to Britain. In the last year, government figures show that Albanians account for the highest number of asylum seekers.

The incident took place after Sunak said he was planning to bring in new legislation to prevent asylum seekers who cross the English Channel from remaining in the country.

Sunak’s new strategy, outlined in a five-point proposal, includes plans to fast-track the return of Albanian asylum seekers and clearing the initial backlog of nearly 150,000 asylum cases by the end of next year by doubling the number of caseworkers.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/307995-at-least-four-people-dead-after-boat-capsizes-in-english-channel>



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