

Dozens feared dead after boat capsizes off Cape Verde



Dakar, August 16 (RHC)-- Several people have been found dead and 38 others rescued from a boat off Cape Verde, authorities said as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) warned that dozens more people were missing and feared dead.

More than 60 people are believed to have died when a migrant boat that left Senegal in July capsized off Cape Verde, the IOM said on Wednesday.

Sixty-three people are thought to have died, while the 38 survivors included four children aged 12 to 16, IOM spokesperson Safa Msehli told the AFP news agency. The fishing boat left Senegal a month ago,

according to media reports in Cape Verde, an island nation about 620 km (385 miles) off the West African coast.

Senegal's foreign ministry said late on Tuesday that 38 people, including a citizen of Guinea-Bissau, were rescued from the boat. The coast guard said the total number of survivors and dead was 48. The local morgue said it had received seven dead bodies.

The vessel was spotted on Monday almost 320km (200 miles) from the island of Sal by a Spanish fishing boat, which alerted Cape Verde authorities, police said. "We must open our arms and welcome the living and bury the dead with dignity," said Cape Verdean Health Minister Filomena Goncalves, as quoted by the Inforpress news agency.

The Spanish migration advocacy group Walking Borders said the vessel was a large fishing boat, called a pirogue, which had left Senegal on July 10 with more than 100 refugees and migrants on board.

Families in Fass Boye, a seaside town 145 km (90 miles) north of the capital Dakar, had contacted Walking Borders on July 20 after ten days without hearing from loved ones on the boat, group founder Helena Maleno Garzón told the Associated Press news agency.

Cheikh Awa Boye, president of the local fishermen's association, said two of his nephews were missing. "They wanted to go to Spain," Boye said. Jose Rui Moreira, a health official in Sal, said seven survivors needed to be taken to hospital, the AFP news agency reported.

Cape Verde lies on the maritime migration route to the Spanish Canary Islands – a gateway to the European Union. Thousands of refugees and migrants fleeing poverty and war risk their lives to make the dangerous journey each year.

They often travel in modest boats or motorised canoes supplied by smugglers, who charge a fee for the journey. In January, rescue teams in Cape Verde saved about 90 refugees and migrants adrift in a canoe, while two others on board died.

They were from Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.

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