

Survivors of rescued Mediterranean ship say dozens died during the voyage



Survivors are rescued by a ship run by SOS Mediterranee [Johanna De Tessieres/Sos Mediterranee/Handout via Reuters]

Rome, March 14 (RHC)-- Survivors from a deflating rubber dinghy rescued in the central Mediterranean Sea reported that at least 60 people who departed Libya with them a week ago died during the journey, a charity rescue group has said.

SOS Mediterranee said on Thursday that it had rescued 25 people in a “very weak” condition in coordination with the Italian coastguard a day earlier. “The survivors departed from Zawiya, Libya, seven days before they were rescued,” SOS Mediterranee said on X.

“Their engine broke after three days, leaving their boat lost (and) adrift without water and food for days. Survivors report that at least 60 people perished on the way, including women and at least one child,” it added.

The rescue group’s spokesman Francesco Creazzo said the survivors were all male, 12 of them minors. They were from Senegal, Mali and The Gambia. According to testimonies the group gathered, the boat spent about a week lost at sea, with survivors saying many people perished and many others are missing.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said it was “deeply troubled” by the incident. “Urgent action is needed to strengthen maritime patrols and prevent further tragedies,” the agency said on X.

SOS Mediterranee said the central Mediterranean route, which the migrants were attempting to cross, is one of the world’s most dangerous sea migration routes. According to the IOM, almost 2,500 migrants died or went missing on the route last year, with the number for this year at 226 so far.

Italy and other European Union governments are trying to quell the number of migrants crossing from North Africa, providing money and resources to Libya and Tunisia to help stop the departures from their shores.

According to the Italian Interior Ministry, 5,968 migrants have arrived by sea so far this year, down from 19,937 at the same stage in 2023.

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