

# *Children among at least 16 dead after asylum-seeker boat capsizes off Djibouti*

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**Boat capsizes off Djibouti coast with 77 people on board including children [Courtesy: X/@UNMigrationNews]**

United Nations, April 23 (RHC)-- At least 16 people are dead and 28 others are missing after a boat carrying asylum seekers capsized off the coast of the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti, according to the UN's migration agency.

The accident occurred on Monday night, about two weeks after another boat carrying mainly Ethiopian asylum seekers sank off the Djibouti coast, killing several dozen people, on the perilous so-called "eastern migration route" from Africa to the Middle East.

"Tragedy as boat capsizes off Djibouti coast with 77 migrants on board including children," the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Tuesday in a post on X. "At least 28 missing. 16 dead," it said, adding that the local IOM branch was "supporting local authorities with search and rescue effort."

Yvonne Ndege, a spokeswoman for the agency, told the AFP news agency that the 16 deaths included children and an infant, without offering further details. Ethiopia's ambassador to Djibouti, Berhanu Tsegaye, said on X that the boat was carrying Ethiopians from Yemen and that the accident occurred off Godoria in northeastern Djibouti. He said 33 people, including one woman, survived.

Another boat carrying more than 60 people sank off the coast of Godoria on April 8, according to the IOM and the Ethiopian embassy in Djibouti. The IOM said at the time that the bodies of 38 people, including children, were recovered, while another six people were missing.

The Ethiopian embassy had said the boat was carrying Ethiopians from Djibouti to war-torn Yemen. Each year, many tens of thousands of African asylum seekers brave the "eastern route" across the Red Sea and through Yemen to try to reach Saudi Arabia, escaping conflict or natural disaster, or seeking better economic opportunities.

"On their journeys, many face life-threatening dangers including starvation, health risks and exploitation – at the hands of human traffickers and other criminals," the IOM said in a statement in February.

Ndege said the IOM's data from 2023 showed that "the number of people trying to cross is on the rise".

According to the IOM, Ethiopians make up 79 percent of about 100,000 people who arrived in Yemen last year from Djibouti or Somalia, the remainder being Somalis.

Africa's second-most populous country, Ethiopia is blighted by various conflicts and several regions have suffered from severe drought in recent years.

More than 15 percent of its 120 million inhabitants depend on food aid.

In February, the IOM said that according to its Missing Migrants Project at least 698 people, including women and children, had died crossing the Gulf of Aden from Djibouti to Yemen last year.

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