

22 Refugees Die as Wooden Boat Capsizes Off Turkish Coast



Ankara, September 16 (RHC)-- Twenty-two asylum seekers have lost their lives as their wooden boat capsized in the Aegean Sea off the Turkish coast.

The 20-meter (66-foot) boat carrying 271 refugees - almost five times more than its capacity - had set off from the resort town of Datça overnight but went down on Tuesday morning about 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) off the Turkish resort town of Bodrum, in international waters between Datça in Turkey and the Greek island of Kos, where tens of thousands of other refugees have arrived in recent weeks.

Amir Çiçek, the governor of Bodrum, said that search and rescue operation had been completed and a total of 249 refugees rescued, adding that 11 women and four children were among the drowned victims trapped under the boat. The asylum seekers, whose nationalities remain unknown, hoped to reach Kos and thence to the Greek mainland and Western Europe.

Meanwhile, the global aid charity Save the Children urged Spain to help hundreds of Syrian refugee children reach Spanish soil in North Africa. "A thousand Syrians who have fled war, most of them children, are stuck in the Moroccan cities of Nador and Beni Ansar waiting for the Moroccan police to let them enter Melilla," a Spanish territory bordering northern Morocco, the charity said in a statement.

Also on Tuesday, the European Union's Frontex border agency said that more than a half million asylum seekers have crossed the bloc's borders so far this year.

The current migration crisis is considered the worst since World War Two and the United Nations refugee agency expects at least 850,000 migrants and asylum seekers to head to the continent this year.

The continent is now divided over how to deal with the influx of people, who are mainly Syrians fleeing the four-year foreign-backed militancy in their homeland.

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