

Over 1,300 Refugees Picked Up in Mediterranean in Single Day



Rome, June 13 (RHC)-- Italy says over 1,300 stranded refugees have been rescued at sea in a single day of naval operations through the Mediterranean. The Italian Coastguard said in a statement over the weekend that asylum seekers of various African nationalities were rescued on Saturday during 11 rescue operations in the stretch of sea between Sicily, Italy's largest island to the south and North Africa.

The operations, which were coordinated by the Italian coastguard, involved the European Union naval mission Eunavfor Med, the Malta-based NGO Moas and a private tugboat. The refugees, including men, women, children and even toddlers and babies, were all reportedly transferred to Sicily.

The rescued refugees on Saturday brought the total number of migrants to over 3,000 in the past three days. On Thursday, similar operations led to the rescue of 2,000 refugees traveling on 15 different boats in the Mediterranean.

Ever since the closure of the so-called Balkan route via Turkey and Greece in March, Italy has become the main entry point for the refugees heading for Europe.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has said in a new report that 48,761 people have so far stepped on Italian shores in 2016, and that the average daily arrivals has also increased from 176 in January to 643 in May.

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