

Nearly 60 drown as migrant boat sinks off Mauritania coast



United Nations, December 5 (RHC)-- At least 58 people, including women and children, were killed after a boat carrying dozens of migrants capsized in the Atlantic Ocean off the West African nation of Mauritania, the United Nations' migration agency said on Wednesday.

The perilous sea passage from West Africa to Europe was once a major route for migrants seeking jobs and prosperity. The sinking is one of the deadliest incidents since the mid-2000s when Spain stepped up patrols and fewer boats attempted the journey.

The boat carrying at least 150 people was low on fuel while approaching Mauritania, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said in a statement. It said 83 people swam to shore. The survivors were being helped by Mauritanian authorities in the northern city of Nouadhibou, the IOM said. Survivors said the boat, with women and children on board, had left the Gambia on November 27th.

"The Mauritanian authorities are very efficiently coordinating the response with the agencies currently present in Nouadhibou," said Laura Lungarotti, chief of mission in Mauritania with the migration agency.

There was no immediate statement from authorities in the Gambia, a small West African nation from which many migrants set off in hopes of reaching Europe. Although home to some of the continent's fastest-growing economies, West Africa is struggling to generate enough jobs for its growing population of

young people.

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