

At least eight migrants drown in shipwreck off Greek island of Samos

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A Greek coast guard ship takes part in a search-and-rescue operation following a shipwreck where at least eight migrants drowned off the island of Samos, Greece [Sofianos Drapaniotis/Reuters]

Athens, November 26 (RHC)-- Greece's coast guard has found the bodies of eight migrants, including six children, who drowned off the island of Samos, authorities said, in the second migrant shipwreck in the Aegean Sea this month.

Greek police found a further 36 people alive in the northern part of Samos on Monday, while three people, trapped in a rocky area of the island, were rescued by coast guard officers, the coast guard said.

A Greek coast guard official said authorities were alerted about the incident by a nongovernmental organisation and estimated that about 50 people had been on board the vessel. It was not immediately clear whether anyone else was still missing. The nationalities of the people on the boat were not known.

In a separate incident on the island of Lesbos, an elderly man died as a group of 27 migrants made landfall in a small boat, the coast guard said.

Greece, in the southeast corner of the European Union, has long been a favoured gateway to Europe for migrants and refugees from the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

More than one million crossed from Turkey to Greece's outlying eastern islands in 2015-2016. Many have drowned while attempting the perilous journey in flimsy boats. The number of arrivals later dropped before surging again last year.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) found that about 54,000 migrants reached Greece in 2024, the second largest number in southern Europe behind Italy. The vast majority of people arrived by sea.

However, many people have died while making the dangerous journey due to rough seas and through the use of flimsy boats. Earlier in November, four people died in a similar shipwreck near the island of Rhodes. In late October, two people also died in a shipwreck off Samos.

Greek Shipping Minister Christos Stylianides said Greece's priority was to end human trafficking networks that were putting profits above the lives of innocent people.

"I want to express my deep sorrow for the loss of eight people, among them six young children," he said in a statement on Monday.

"We will tackle the great problem of illegal immigration which has exceeded the limits of endurance of the European Union."

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]

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