

Twenty-nine Migrants Die of Hypothermia on Italian Patrol Boat



Rome, February 10 (RHC)-- Twenty-nine stranded migrants rescued from a drifting boat off Libya by Italian coast guard patrol vessels have died of hypothermia after remaining 18 hours on a vessel's deck en route to the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Two Italian patrol vessels picked up 105 migrants late Sunday night from an inflatable boat adrift in stormy sea conditions and near freezing temperatures, the coast guard announced in a Monday statement. The new fatalities renewed criticism against the Italian government's decision to halt its full-scale maritime search-and rescue missions in 2014.

Battered by high winds and mist on the way to Lampedusa, the 29 died due to being kept on the deck of one of the vessels for long. This is while one survivor was transported by helicopter to Sicily in critical condition, according to Lampedusa's chief healthcare official.

The official further added that the dead were all young men from sub-Saharan Africa, although he did not specify their nationalities.

According to the United Nations refugee agency, 160,000 migrants made the sea crossing to Italy between January and November 2014 and 40,000 more landed in Greece.

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