

# *More than 700 Refugees Feared Dead in Mediterranean Shipwrecks*

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Geneva, May 30 (RHC)-- The United Nation's refugee agency says up to 700 asylum-seekers may have lost their lives in three shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea over the past few days. Carlotta Sami, a spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said on Sunday that the deadly incidents happened off the coast of Libya on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

The UN spokesperson said one of the shipwrecks was believed to have claimed over 500 lives on Thursday morning, adding that at least 40 of the dead were children, including newborn babies.

In the third shipwreck on Friday, at least 45 bodies were pulled from the water and an unspecified number of others are missing. Survivors were brought to safety at the Italian ports of Taranto and Pozzallo.

Meanwhile, some humanitarian groups citing testimonies from survivors have put the death toll from the shipwrecks at much higher. Giovanna Di Benedetto, a spokeswoman for Save the Children, said survivors have spoken of around 1,100 people setting out from Sabratha in Libya on Wednesday.

Europe is facing an unprecedented influx of refugees, most of whom are fleeing conflict zones in Africa and the Middle East, particularly Syria. Many blame major European powers for the unprecedented

exodus, saying their policies have led to a surge in terrorism and war in the violence-hit regions, forcing more people out of their homes.

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