

IOM-UN MIGRATION VERY CONCERNED BY THE TRAGIC SINKING OF A MIGRANTS' BOAT OFF KERKENNAH

68 survivors, more than a hundred dead and missing migrants off Kerkennah-Sfax, this is the provisional record of the night of Saturday to Sunday, June 3, 2018 where about 180 migrants undertook an uncertain crossing to the European coasts on a fragile and overloaded craft.

According to Lorena Lando, chief mission of the IOM, UN migration agency, in Tunisia, among the 60 victims transferred to the forensic department at Habib Bourguiba hospital in Sfax, 48 are Tunisians, of whom 24 have already identified, while 12 are non-Tunisian (6 women and 6 men); the identifications are in progress. The 68 survivors include 60 Tunisians, 2 Moroccans, 1 Libyan, 1 Malian, 1 Cameroonian and 3 Ivorians (including 2 women).

The migrants reportedly paid 2,000 to 3,000 TND (700 to 1000 Euros) for the crossing. The fishing boat that transported them left the Kerkennah coast on Saturday, June 2nd in the early evening, and started sinking 2 hours later. It was around 22:45 that the maritime units of the Tunisian Army and the National Guard responded to the call for distress, 5 miles from the Kerkennah coast.

"There are no words to describe this tragedy," said Lorena Lando, "Behind these numbers, men, women and children have lost their lives while pursuing an uncertain dream." Our thoughts are with families and loved ones to whom we present our sincere condolences and assure of our most absolute solidarity. "

After the rescue, the IOM team in Sfax was mobilized on site to provide emergency assistance, conduct needs assessment interviews and provide psychological support to survivors, in close collaboration with the crisis unit deployed by the Ministry of Health, the Tunisian Red Crescent, the local authorities and the partners involved.

The search and rescue operations carried out by National Guard and National Navy units, with the participation of a military aircraft and divers of the National Army and Civil Defense, continue in the hope of rescuing survivors and recovering the bodies of the victims. "IOM continues to gather information on the tragedy and to assess ways to support the survivors", added Lorena Lando.

This tragedy comes as IOM identifies 1,910 Tunisian migrants who reached Italy's coasts between January 1st and April 30th, 2018, including 39 women and 307 minors - 293 unaccompanied. They were 231 for the same period in 2017.

IOM, which calls for an approach based on dialogue and cooperation to better respond to migration challenges and to protect all migrants regardless of their legal status, recommends, *inter alia*, intensifying outreach activities, and in particular, information campaigns targeting the risks of irregular migration and promoting legal alternatives to make migration an informed choice and not an absolute necessity.

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