

Two shipwrecks add to 'alarming increase' in migrant deaths off Libya coast: IOM

More than 200 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean in the past three days, bringing the overall death toll so far this year to more than 1,000, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) reported on Monday.

The tragic weekend began on [Friday](#) with the deaths of an estimated 103 people, including three babies, when the rubber dinghy they were on sank off the coast of Libya.

The Libyan Coast Guard rescued 16 survivors: young men from the Gambia, Sudan, Yemen, Niger and Guinea.

The incident was followed on Sunday by the capsizing of a small rubber boat off the Libyan port city of Al Khums, east of the capital, Tripoli. The vessel was packed with migrants and while 41 people survived, 100 are reported missing.

During this same time period, the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted several small vessels heading towards the open sea, returning nearly 1,000 migrants to shore.

The people were provided with food, water and health care, as well as other emergency assistance, and were interviewed by IOM staff. They were later transferred to detention centres, where IOM continues to provide humanitarian assistance.

The Libyan Coast Guard has returned some 10,000 people to shore so far this year, according to IOM. Othman Belbeisi, its Libya Chief of Mission, reported an "alarming increase" in deaths at sea.

"Smugglers are exploiting the desperation of migrants to leave before there are further crackdowns on Mediterranean crossings by Europe," he said.

IOM Director General William Lacy Swing will travel to Tripoli this week to see first-hand the conditions rescued migrants face and those returned to shore by the coast guard.

He said the UN agency "is determined to ensure that the human rights of all migrants are respected as together we all make efforts to stop the people-smuggling trade, which is so exploitative of migrants."