

Beat: Health

Italy finds 30 bodies on migrant boat in Mediterranean Sea

-, 01.07.2014, 02:06 Time

USPA News - Around 30 migrants who were attempting to travel by boat from the North African coast to Italy are believed to have suffocated to death on the Mediterranean Sea, the Italian Navy said on Monday after more than 5,000 migrants were rescued over the weekend. The gruesome discovery was made on Sunday afternoon when the Italian Navy boarded a boat carrying nearly 600 refugees to help those most in distress.

"Thirty bodies were found in the hold during the search and rescue and inspection operations onboard the boat," the Navy said in a statement. Medical staff who examined some of the corpses determined that most of the victims likely died of asphyxia while some others may have died of drowning. But because of the cramped conditions on board, the medical staff recommended to leave the bodies in the vessel's hold until they reached a port in Italy. "After the completion of the rescue operations for migrants, the vessel was towed by Frigate Grecale and now heads to the port of Pozzallo where it will arrive in one day (Tuesday)," the Navy said. It said Grecale was carrying 566 migrants on board while the corvette Chimera, also due to reach Pozzallo on Tuesday, was carrying 353 migrants. Overall, the Italian Navy rescued nearly 5,000 migrants over the weekend, demonstrating the enormous refugee crisis Italy is faced with as tens of thousands attempt to make the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in the hopes of reaching Europe. The crisis makes the Mediterranean Sea the world's deadliest stretch of water with hundreds of deaths each year. According to Navy figures, the amphibious ship San Giorgio rescued the largest number of migrants over the weekend, taking on around 1,170 migrants. Offshore patrol vessel Dattilo took 1,096 migrants while the tanker Etna picked up 1,044 migrants. A number of smaller boats were also involved in Operation Mare Nostrum over the weekend. So far this year, the Italian Navy has rescued more than 60,000 people at sea, most of them fleeing the raging civil war in Syria. The number of those rescued as part of the operation will soon surpass the record 63,000 migrants who were rescued by Italy in 2011 at the height of the Arab Spring.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2382/italy-finds-30-bodies-on-migrant-boat-in-mediterranean-sea.html>

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