

The Developing Immigration Tragedy in the Mediterranean 2009

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Tragic news is emerging of yet another accident towards the South of Malta just 30 to 40 miles off the Libyan Coast. More than 300 Africans including women and children are feared to have drowned after their boats capsized in their endeavour to reach the European coast via Lampedusa or Malta. Quoting official Libyan sources 4 rickety boats left the Libyan coast last Sunday and one of them carrying 365 immigrants overturned in the rough seas. This boat is only meant to hold about 75 people and was unsteady at sea due to the extra weight.

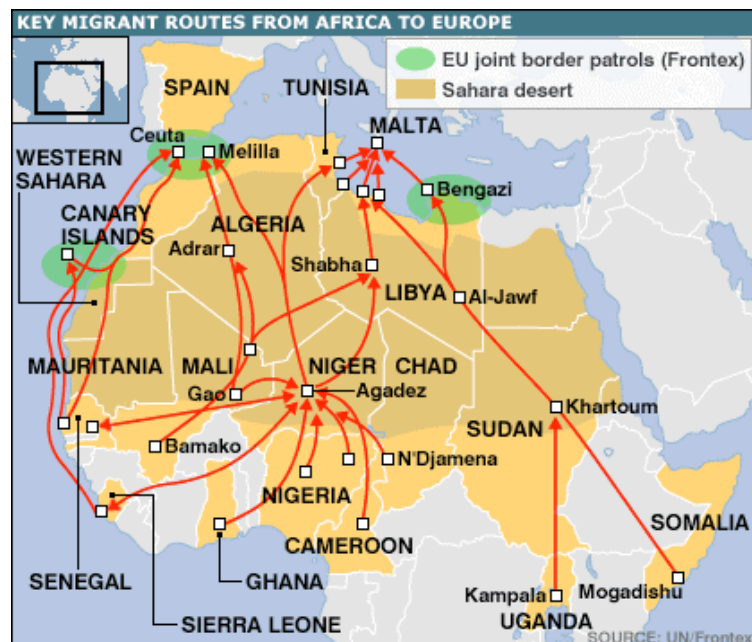
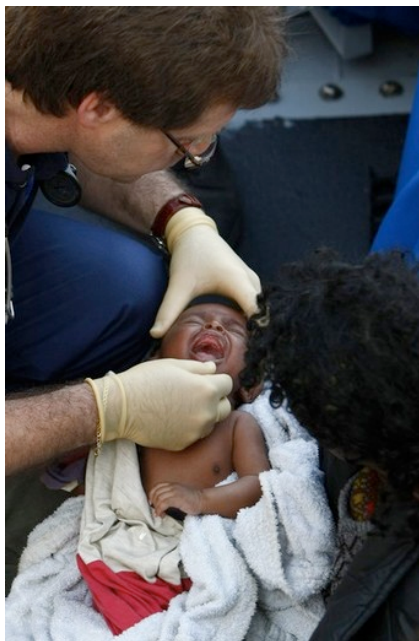
According to these sources there are people of various Nationalities, thought to be from Somalia, Nigeria, Eritrea, the Kurdish area of Syria, Algeria, Morocco, Palestinian territories and Tunisia. A second large boat crammed with 350 migrants broke down and was fortunately rescued by the Libyan coastguards and towed back to land.

If the figures of the drowned migrants is proved to be correct this may turn out to be the worst accident at sea in the Mediterranean since World War II, the previous mass immigrant drowning accident occurred back on Christmas day 1996 where a total of 283 immigrants perished as they were being transferred to another boat in mid sea during rough weather in their endeavour to reach mainland Europe.

Malta has already received five large boat arrivals since post Christmas 2008.

Arrivals	Number of Immigrants rescued	Males	Females	Children
29th. December 2008	139	103	36	0
12th. January 2009	163	124	28	11
1st. February 2009	262	253	7	2
5th. February 2009	105	83	22	0
18th. February 2009	228	204	22	2
Total Arrivals	897	767	115	15

This pattern of irregular immigration has drastically increased over the past 12 months where over 67000 immigrants have crossed over to Europe in 2008, men, women and children fleeing their homeland in their attempt to make the dangerous trip to Europe every year, seeking refuge and asylum hoping to find economic opportunity and work in Europe. Other reasons why these people cross into Libya are also to escape war zones, oppression or persecution. Many are young males leaving their families behind in the hope of prospering in Europe and then finding a way to transfer their close ones over to Europe at a later date.



They travel thousands of miles across Africa, often having to cross the unforgiving Sahara desert making it to the Northern ports of Africa crossing the uncontrollable Libyan border. There they sit around hoping to find odd jobs in order to save enough money to pay the exploiters and smugglers who offer them the chance to take the perilous journey across the Mediterranean for about \$1000 to \$2000 a head. Thus these smugglers who masterminded the latest tragedy at sea are over \$ 300000 richer which can only be considered to be blood money. There are unofficial figures that over 2000 immigrants lost their lives last year in attempting the crossing.