

Migrant boat sinks off Tunisia coast; 4 dead, 7 missing

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Sat, 2022-01-22 22:42

TUNIS: Four people died after a boat carrying Europe-bound migrants on the Mediterranean Sea sank off Tunisia's coast, the Tunisian Defense Ministry said Friday.

Defense Ministry spokesman Mohamed Zekri said navy divers rescued 21 people on Thursday night and seven were still missing. The boat was heading to Italy, Zekri said.

Local media reported that a 10-year-old girl was among those who died.

Survivors told authorities that the boat had left the island of Kerkennah, near the port city of Sfax, carrying 32 Tunisians.

The UN has estimated that 20 percent of about 115,000 migrants who reached Europe by sea last year started the journey from Tunisia. Social unrest has gripped the North African country for years as the economy worsened and unemployment reached 18 percent.

The central Mediterranean route, which runs from North Africa to southern Italy, is the busiest and deadliest migration route to Europe. People travel from Libya and Tunisia in crowded boats and at the mercy of the smugglers they pay to get them across the sea.

About 60,000 people arrived in Italy by sea last year, and some 1,200 died or disappeared on the journey, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

On Wednesday, an amphibious unit of Tunisia's navy rescued 23 people from a sinking boat as they left Tunisia for Italy, according to the Tunisian Defense ministry. It said 13 of the passengers were from Mali and 10 were from the Ivory Coast.



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At least 11 migrants drown off Tunisia in shipwreck
Bodies of drowned migrants wash up on Libyan shore

[Syrian boy to receive four prosthetic limbs in Italy](#)

Sat, 2022-01-22 22:36

LONDON: A Syrian child born with no limbs after his mother endured a gas attack during her pregnancy is set to receive four prosthetic replacements in Italy following a charity campaign.

Thanks to donations totalling €114,000 (\$129,000), Mustafa Al-Nazzar, 6, will be treated by world-leading doctors at the INAIL prosthetic center near Bologna.

“It will be a complicated job, but we aim to allow Mustafa to live an autonomous life,” said Gregorio Teti, technical director of the center that

has worked with Alex Zanardi, the Formula One driver who lost his legs in a crash.

Al-Nazzar's mother was pregnant when the Syrian regime dropped gas bombs on Idlib province in 2016. The event has been linked to the boy's condition.

Like so many others caught up in the regime's oppression and the ongoing conflict, the family fled to Turkey, where Al-Nazzar was photographed being held in the air by his father, who lost a leg following a bomb attack.

The famous photo captures their beaming smiles despite the suffering they have both endured.

The photographer was honored by the Siena International Photo Awards, which diverted the world's eyes to the photo, inspiring the organizers of the prize to launch a charity appeal for Al-Nazzar.

"We feared that after the attention to the photo died down, the boy would get no help," said Luca Venturi, the prize founder.

The Italian government has assisted with visas to bring the whole family to Italy, including Al-Nazzar's two younger sisters. The Catholic Church has offered the family an apartment.

Teti said Al-Nazzar's new limbs could be adjusted to work thanks to small movements the boy makes in his shoulders and torso, which will require lengthy training sessions.

Venturi said: "As he grows he will need to change limbs, while translators will be needed until the family can learn Italian. We are aiming to get to €400,000 raised."

Al-Nazzar's father told Italian media: "Mustafa is really happy, he has said he will finally be able to walk, hug me and go to school on his own."



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Saudi Arabia's aid agency provides prosthetics services in Aden
Saudi Arabia's prosthetics center puts smile on faces of Yemenis

[Jailed British-Iranian man begins hunger strike](#)

Sat, 2022-01-22 21:13

LONDON: A British-Iranian dual national imprisoned in Iran will begin a hunger strike on Sunday in support of an American former hostage of Tehran who is staging his own hunger strike outside the nuclear talks in Vienna.

Anoosheh Ashoori is staging the strike in solidarity with Barry Rosen, 77, who, as then-press attache at the US Embassy in Tehran, was held hostage for 444 days between 1979 and 1981.

Ashoori was arrested in August 2017 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment

for espionage. He is now jailed in Evin prison in Tehran.

His wife Sherry said: "We are extremely concerned for his health as he approaches his 68th birthday, but having failed to see any progress in the UK Foreign Office's efforts to secure his release, and no sign of the welfare of hostages held by Iran currently being a priority of Western governments, he will begin his hunger strike."

Rosen says hostages should be released as part of a new nuclear deal, and has also been joined on hunger strike by Lebanese US resident Nizar Zakka, who was detained by Iran between 2015 and 2019.

Rosen told The Guardian: "I am receiving heart-rending messages from Iranians, and I am absolutely humbled that Anoosheh is doing this in support of me.

"I support him completely in return and I urge him to be careful and look after himself. I am starting to feel tired and weak, but I am determined to continue.

"I am here to call on the Americans and the Europeans to make the release of the hostages a condition of any agreement to renew the Iran nuclear deal.

"This has been going on for 40 years, and people are being thrown in jail with no evidence. There has to be an agreement that this will end."

Rosen said he is concerned that Western countries are not taking Iran's hostage-taking strategy seriously. "It is like herding cats. Each country seems to deal with its dual national hostages on its own," he added.

"There is no sense of commonality, so they leave Iran to pick each country off. Something is missing here. The Iranians seem to be dividing and ruling.

"I decided to do this (campaign) two weeks ago. I am just an individual, and thought I might be a lone eagle, but it feels like a movement might be starting."



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Iran hostage crisis victim to hunger strike for release of others detained by Tehran
Daughter of British-Iranian political prisoner sends plea to UK PM

[UAE stops drone flying for owners, practitioners and enthusiasts:](#) [Interior Ministry](#)

Sat, 2022-01-22 21:16

ABU DHABI: The UAE has grounded most private drones and light sports aircraft used for recreational purposes for a month starting Saturday, the Interior Ministry said, following a deadly attack this week by Yemen's Houthis.

While the Interior Ministry did not refer directly to the attack in imposing the ban, it said the decision came after finding misuse of permits granted to those who practice these sports.

“MOI (Ministry of Interior) is currently stopping all flying operations for owners, practitioners and enthusiasts of drones, including drones and light sports aircrafts,” it said in a statement.

وزارة الداخلية تصدر بياناً تحذيرياً لهواة وممارسي وملاك الطائرات بدون طيار

MOI stops drone flying operations for owners, practitioners and enthusiasts#تحذير #Warning pic.twitter.com/YGTjjC4Zlm

– وزارة الداخلية (@moiuae) [January 22, 2022](https://twitter.com/moiuae/status/1494444444444444444)

Exceptions might be granted by the permit authorities for businesses using drones for filming, the ministry said.

The UAE said the Iran-backed Houthi militia used cruise missiles and ballistic missiles alongside drones in the attack on Monday that killed three civilians.

The Houthi attack hit a fuel depot of state oil firm ADNOC in Musaffah and a construction site near Abu Dhabi airport, the UAE confirmed while adding it intercepted part of the attack.



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Downed drones show Hezbollah surveillance: Israel securityAustralia to buy giant surveillance drones

[Lebanon to start virtual talks with IMF next week](#)

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Sat, 2022-01-22 20:22

BEIRUT: Lebanese officials will start talks with the International Monetary Fund on Monday, an official government source told Reuters.

An IMF spokesperson also told Reuters on Saturday that a team will start virtual talks with Lebanese authorities next week.

The Lebanese government has said it hopes to reach an initial agreement with the fund for financial support between January and February. Lebanon is in the grip of an unprecedented financial crisis and an IMF deal is widely seen as the only way for it to secure aid.

The fund said in December it was assessing a \$69 billion figure announced by Lebanese officials for losses in the country's financial sector.

Disagreements in Lebanon over the size of the losses and how they should be distributed torpedoed IMF talks in 2020. The central bank, banks and political elite rejected figures set out in a government plan that was endorsed by the IMF at the time.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati said in September that the financial recovery plan to be drawn up by his cabinet will include a fair distribution of losses suffered by the financial system, but the cabinet hasn't convened since October.

It will convene again on Monday to discuss the 2022 budget, but no clear details have been released about the recovery plan.

The Lebanese financial system collapsed in 2019 because of decades of corruption and waste in the state and the unsustainable way it was financed. The trigger was slowing inflows of hard currency into the banking system, which lent heavily to the government.

Several reforms the IMF would likely seek, including cutting subsidies and unifying the numerous exchange rates in Lebanon's chaotic cash economy, are already becoming realities as hard currency dries up, political sources say.



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Lebanon's PM to meet Kuwaiti foreign minister in Beirut
Lebanon's 2022 draft budget forecasts 20.8% deficit amid financial crisis