

After Aylan Kurdi, another drowned toddler washes up on Turkish beach

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Istanbul: A four-year-old Syrian girl's body washed up on a beach in western Turkey on Friday, state media said, just weeks after images of drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi shook the world.

The yet-to-be identified girl was found lifeless on a beach in the Aegean town of Cesme in Izmir province after a boat carrying 15 Syrians to the Greek island of Chios sank, the official Anatolia news agency said.

It said the Turkish coast guard rescued the remaining 14 Syrians, including eight children, from the inflatable boat. The girl appeared to be the only casualty.

Harrowing pictures of three-year-old Syrian refugee Aylan Kurdi, whose body was found washed up on a Turkish beach after the boat carrying his family to the Greek island of Kos sank, caused an outpouring of emotion around the world, pressuring European leaders to step up their response to the refugee crisis.

But two weeks later EU members are still at odds over how to accommodate the tens of thousands of new arrivals. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said on Friday that the Turkish coast guard had rescued over 53,000 refugees from stricken boats since the beginning of the year.

He said around 274 refugees have lost their lives in Turkish waters this year seeking to leave the country by sea for Greece. In the latest tragedy, 22 people who had left Turkey drowned on Tuesday when their wooden boat sank off Kos.

refugees have in recent days turned to Turkey's land borders with Greece and Bulgaria to avoid the sea voyage that has cost over 2,600 people their lives in the Mediterranean this year.

Several hundred refugees spent a third day camped in and around the Turkish border city of Edirne, which lies 10 kilometres (six miles) from the Greek border and is being promoted on social media as a safer route out of Turkey than sea journey in overcrowded dinghies.

Under an "open-door" policy championed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey has taken in 2.2 million Syrian refugees since the conflict in Syria erupted in 2011. Kurtulmus said Turkey has so far spent almost USD 7 billion to provide for Syrian refugees.

- PTI