

Libyan coastguard says 100 migrants may have drowned near Tripoli

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In this Wednesday, June 20, 2018 photo, released by the Libyan coast guard, African migrants who were found on a damaged rubber boat in the Mediterranean Sea and rescued by the Libyan coast guard rest on the shore, east of the capital, Tripoli, Libya. The coast guard said it rescued some 82 African migrants, including four women and two children, and recovered one body. (Libyan Coast Guard via AP)

Tripoli: Around 100 people are thought to have drowned from a migrant boat off Libya's western coast, a coastguard official said on Friday.

The coastguard picked up 14 survivors from the boat just east of the capital, Tripoli, the official said. Separately, the coastguard said it had intercepted 200 migrants from two other migrant boats east of Tripoli.

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Some make it to international waters where they hope to be picked up by international vessels, but increasing numbers are intercepted by Libya's EU-backed coastguard and returned to Libya.

Departures surged in 2014 when conflict in Libya worsened and more than 650,000 migrants have crossed the central Mediterranean since then. But the traffic has slowed since last July, when smuggling networks on Libya's Mediterranean coast were partially disrupted under heavy Italian pressure.

This year just over 11,400 arrivals from Libya have been registered by Italy's interior ministry, more than 80 percent fewer than during the same period in 2016 and 2017.

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