



27 August 2014 – Last weekend marked one the deadliest weekends for migration in the Mediterranean in 2014. A series of tragedies left 230 African migrants lost at sea, presumed dead.

In 2013, the disaster at Lampedusa left over 360 migrants dead and thrust to the forefront the dangers faced by migrants as they cross the Mediterranean to seek refuge in Europe. The tragedies this weekend, and the combined 1,800 migrant deaths thus far in 2014, require the international community to recognize, and address, these dangers.

“One more time, these tragic events show that something must be done to solve the problem of irregular immigration across the Mediterranean,” [said](#) the [International Organization for Migration](#)’s Director General William Lacy Swing. “The obligation to save lives surpasses everything else. But rescue at sea is not the ultimate solution. Alternatives are needed: providing safe and legal entry into Europe; resettlement opportunities; family reunification; and voluntary return for economic migrants who do not need protection,” he added.



The estimated number of deaths (1,800), already double the estimated total of 700 deaths for 2013. They are endemic of the [migration surge](#) Europe, especially Italy, is experiencing. As of August the number of [migrants](#) arriving in Italy has swelled to an estimated 108,000 people. This is in comparison to a total of 40,304 migrants for the [entire](#) [year](#) of 2013 and the 60,000 that arrived in 2011 following the Arab Spring.

Eritrea and Syria are the two largest countries of origin for irregular migrants arriving in Italy by sea. Other nationalities included Malians, Nigerians, Gambians and Somalis. Political unrest, instability and current disruptions in these countries and surrounding areas are [driving](#) [migrants](#) to seek shelter elsewhere.

Those fleeing are prone to fall victim to organised smuggling gangs. Victims say smugglers are becoming increasingly reckless, putting migrants aboard unsafe vessels without sufficient fuel and without life jackets. As their ships break down, run dry or suffer other issues migrants are left to their own devices, the strong swimming for their lives, the weak left to drift or drown.

“If the basic human rights of these people are to be protected, the international community must act together to crack down on these brutal smuggling networks and provide alternatives for these desperate people,” said Ambassador Swing.

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