



17 April 2015 - UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres on Wednesday expressed shock at news from the Mediterranean that hundreds of people were missing after their boat sank and called anew for urgent action to prevent such tragedies in the future.

The latest incident involves the capsizing of a double-decker boat on Monday in waters about 120 kilometres south of Italy's Lampedusa Island. So far, 142 people have been rescued and eight bodies recovered, but survivors said some 400 others were aboard and are feared lost. If the 400 deaths are confirmed from the latest incident the death toll so far this year will have reached 900.

The Mediterranean has emerged in recent years as the most dangerous of the world's four major sea routes in use by refugees and migrants. [Last year](#), some 219,000 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean, and at least 3,500 lives were [lost](#).

According to the Italian Coastguard more than 8,500 people have been rescued from several dozen boats and rubber dinghies since last Friday.

"This only demonstrates how important it is to have a robust rescue-at-sea mechanism, in the central Mediterranean," he said. "Unfortunately Mare Nostrum was never replaced by an equivalent capacity to rescue people the High Commissioner added, referring to the major search and rescue effort which was [terminated](#) at the end of 2014.

The first and second largest countries of arrival respectively are Italy and Greece and numbers have recently been [picking up](#) further as sea and weather conditions improve.

[UNHCR](#) has been [advocating](#) for a comprehensive and urgent response from the EU and member states to deal with the challenges posed by the thousands of refugees and migrants who risk their lives trying to [reach Europe](#) .

They have called specifically for a robust search and rescue operation, a possible EU scheme to compensate shipping companies [involved](#) in rescuing people at sea, increasing credible legal alternatives to dangerous voyages – such as resettlement, humanitarian visas and other innovative solutions – and a pilot relocation programme for Syrians refugees arriving in Italy and Greece.