

Migrants dying in Mediterranean by the thousands as they flee turmoil in Libya, Syria



①Italy's boot-shaped peninsula extends into the Mediterranean Sea like a low branch, beckoning migrants from the Middle East and Africa fleeing the turmoil in their home countries. As the fighting and anarchy has raged in countries such as Syria and Libya, the desperate have gone to sea in rickety boats by the hundreds, sometimes with the "help" of unscrupulous smugglers. The voyages are becoming increasingly deadly.

②Some 700 people perished this past weekend, more than the total number of migrants who died at sea last year. It was "without any doubt the deadliest weekend ever in the Mediterranean," a spokesman for the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, Carlotta Sami, told the Guardian.

③This weekend's death toll follows three deadly migrant shipwrecks that happened during the last weekend of August in the Mediterranean off of the Libyan coast. The passengers included children. Hundreds are presumed dead.

④The recent tragedies put this year's death toll at about 2,900, the International Organization for Migration estimated. That's more than four times the number of migrants who died at sea in 2013. It even tops the number who died in 2011 at the height of the Arab Spring.

⑤"We all need to wake up to the scale of this crisis. There is a direct link between the conflicts in Syria and elsewhere and the rise in deaths at sea in the Mediterranean," actress Angelina Jolie said in a statement. "Unless we address the root causes of these conflicts, the numbers of refugees dying or unable to find protection will continue to rise." Jolie, a UNHCR special envoy, visited a rescue center in Malta Sunday.

⑥The deadliest shipwreck occurred off the coast of Malta. The UNHCR estimated 300 of the 500 passengers from Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Sudan perished at sea. Two Palestinian survivors told the International Organization for Migration the boat left Damietta, Egypt, on Sept. 6. IOM spokesman Leonard Doyle told the Guardian that survivors said the smugglers, who were traveling in a separate boat, ordered their passengers to move to a smaller boat halfway through the voyage. When they refused, a fight broke out, and the smugglers used their boat to sink the one the migrants were on.

⑦"If this story, which police are investigating, is true, it would be the worst shipwreck in years— not an accident but a mass murder, perpetrated by criminals without scruples or any respect for human life," the IOM said in a statement reported by the BBC.

⑧One of the Palestinians, who was 27 years old, clung to a lifebuoy for a day-and-a-half. He was with six other passengers who one by one disappeared. One of them was a young Egyptian man who said he left home to find work so he could pay for heart medicine for his father, he told the IOM. Both Palestinian men were eventually rescued by a Panama-registered container ship carrying 386 survivors from another migrant shipwreck.

⑨According to the Guardian, Malta's armed forces flew seven other survivors, who were suffering from hypothermia, to a hospital in Crete. On Monday news came of a second tragedy near Tajoura, east of the Libyan capital Tripoli. Libya, where lawlessness has reigned since dictator Moammar Gaddafi was toppled in a 2011 uprising, is the main departure point for migrants. The instability has fostered a burgeoning smuggling operation.

⑩The Libyan navy said a ship carrying about 250 African migrants sank on Sunday. So far only 36 are confirmed rescued, Reuters reported. Among them was a pregnant woman, the Associated Press said. "There are so many dead bodies floating in the sea," Libyan navy spokesman Ayub Qassem told Reuters. Libya's coast guard is a shoestring operation that relies on fishing boats and tug boats it borrows from the oil ministry.

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beckon: 招き寄せる turmoil: 騒動 anarchy: 無政府状態 rage: 猛威を振るう rickety: がたがたの unscrupulous: あくどい perish: 非業の死を遂げる shipwreck: 難破 scruple: 良心の呵責 cling: しがみつク lifebuoy: 救命ブイ fly: 空輸する hypothermia: 低体温症 shoestring: 〈資金・予算など〉わずかな、乏しい

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. Why do so many people try to flee to Europe from Libya and Syria?
2. How does this mass exodus affect other countries?
3. Please tell something about the Arab Spring mentioned in paragraph #4. How it is related to the tragedy in the Mediterranean?
4. Angelina Jolie is a Hollywood celebrity and a UNHCR special envoy as well. Can you think of other celebrities who are also active in humanitarian causes? How effective are celebrities for this kind of responsibility?
5. If necessary, would you agree for Japan to accept refugees from other countries?
6. Make sentences using the following words: beckon, turmoil, anarchy, Unscrupulous, perish, hypothermia, migrant, smugglers and shoestring.

ヨーロッパは経済的停滞から十分に立ち直れないまま、「アラブの春」以降、社会的混乱や紛争を逃れてアフリカや中東から流入する移民、難民の急増に直面している。「人権の尊重、自由な人の移動」はEUの中核理念であるが、現実には既存住民との文化的摩擦の苦悩が尽きない。