

# Dozens of refugees drown near Greek island of Farmakonisi

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Some 45 refugees, including 17 children, drowned in boat sinkings in the Aegean Sea Friday, after capsizing near the Greek island of Farmakonisi, according to Greece's coast guard.

The dead were among the growing toll of victims to die while fleeing from the fallout of a decade of relentless imperialist war in the Middle East and North Africa. The deaths come just days after 15 refugees died in another sinking near Farmakonisi. More than 110 refugees have died in the Mediterranean in January, surpassing the total for January 2015, according to statistics compiled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

During the past year, the IOM has documented at least 2,910 refugee deaths and disappearances occurring during transit of the "Central Route," an area roughly between Libya and the Italian coast. Some 900 more refugee deaths have been confirmed in the Eastern Mediterranean from January 2015 to January 2016, according to IOM. At least 7,000 have drowned in the Mediterranean since late 2013, according to the IOM.

Despite the immense perils of the journey, more and more are attempting to cross into Europe. Nearly 40,000 refugees have landed in Greece and Italy this month, a figure more than 10 times higher than that of January 2015.

Every day sees the arrival on Mediterranean shores of rickety boats packed with refugees desperately fleeing the fallout of wars in Syria, Libya and Yemen. Millions have abandoned their homes in response to the constant threat of death at the hands of US military forces and proxy armies, and the absence of employment and reliable food and water created by the widespread destruction of infrastructure.

The death toll will only continue to grow as European

governments increasingly target the growing displaced masses with air and naval military operations. As part of the European Union Naval Force operation launched last year, an armada of EU warships, aircraft and drones has been deployed under orders to target suspected smuggling boats.

Refugees who survive the crossing to European shores are being welcomed by a growing refugee management system of concentration camps, militarized police and ever more authoritarian refugee laws. The Danish parliament is preparing policy changes that will empower the state to seize personal property of refugees. Any assets over \$10,000 are subject to confiscation under the proposed law, with an exception for wedding rings being inserted only after the deliberations produced unexpectedly high levels of public outrage.

The murderous crackdown on refugees is closely linked with the preparations for dictatorship being pursued by the entire European ruling class. On January 13, German police carried out mass raids against hundreds of Berlin residents in an area associated with left-wing anarchist and anti-fascist groups.

Hundreds of heavily armed officers swarmed into an entire neighborhood, occupying it for days. Sweden's top diplomat called for a military draft to reinforce Stockholm's anti-migrant operations on January 10, and Stockholm passed anti-refugee legislation last October banning refugees from acquiring permanent residency status in Sweden.



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