Beat: Miscellaneous

Around 100 still missing after boat sinking off Nigeria

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USPA News - Around 100 people remained missing Wednesday after a boat capsized off the coast of southern Nigeria earlier this week, local authorities said, but there were conflicting reports about the exact number of victims. As many as 45 bodies have been recovered.

The large wooden boat, the MV Sonny, left the town of Oron in Nigeria`s Akwa Ibom state on Friday and was heading to Gabon when it capsized about 40 nautical miles (74 kilometers) off the coast of Calabar, the state capital of Nigeria`s Cross River State. It is believed up to 168 people were on board. At least 27 people were known to have been rescued as of Wednesday, but the vast majority of passengers remained missing and feared dead. David Akate, the assistant director of the Cross River State Emergency Management Agency, said two of the survivors - a young boy and a woman - had clung to a gas cylinder before they were rescued by fishermen. But most details remained sketchy or conflicting. Yushau Shuaib, a spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), said only nine bodies had been recovered while a medical source in Cross River State said at least 45 bodies had been pulled from the water as of late Wednesday. This meant between 96 and 132 people remained missing, but authorities expressed little hope of finding more survivors from the accident, which is believed to have happened on Sunday or Monday. The wooden vessel was carrying illegal immigrants who were being trafficked to Gabon. There have been similar accidents in the region in the past, in part because little to no safety regulations have allowed boats to be overloaded, poorly maintained and operating with no reliable passenger lists.

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