

At least nine dead bodies wash up the beach in northeastern Somalia, residents say

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MOGADISHU Somalia

At least nine bodies have washed ashore in northeastern Somalia, where residents suspect the victims drowned while attempting an illegal crossing of the Red Sea into Yemen.

The dead included women and teenagers. They were found with letters that people in Somalia had written to relatives in Yemen, Haji Ali Mohamed one of the fishermen who discovered the dead bodies late Sunday, told The Associated Press on Monday.

Thousands of Somalis and Ethiopians try to escape poverty by crossing the Gulf of Aden each year, many hoping to reach Europe after Yemen.

Dozens drown each year when vessels capsize in rough seas. Smugglers sometimes force migrants off the boats in an effort to escape detection by Yemeni authorities.

In January, at least 53 people drowned and dozens were missing after two boats carrying migrants capsized, killing at least 42 people, and poor conditions on a third ship killed 11, four of whom were reportedly thrown overboard while still alive.

Police in Somalia's semiautonomous Puntland region have begun investigations to determine the identity and nationalities of those whose bodies washed ashore Sunday and if there were others who are still missing at sea, said Nuure Abdi, a police officer.