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Bodies of 49 Migrants Who Died of Asphyxiation Arrive in Italy

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At least 102,000 migrants have arrived on Italy's shores this year alone, as people flee war, violence and poverty in their home countries.

The 49 bodies of the migrants who died from asphyxiation in the hold of an overcrowded fishing boat off the Italian coast over the weekend arrived in Sicily Monday

The Norwegian Frontex coastguard vessel transported some 312 survivors of the recent Mediterranean disaster, as well as a container that carried the bodies of the deceased, to the Sicilian port of Catania.

The death toll was originally thought to be closer to 40, but officials confirmed Sunday that 49 bodies had been found below deck. The victims died amid exhaust fumes and suffocating heat, packed inside a confined space in the boat's hold.

According to officials, the victims were primarily married men who had given spots on the deck to their wives.

In a separate expedition, the Italian coastguard rescued 354 migrants Sunday evening from a fishing boat off its southern coast, with one person found dead on board.

According to the United Nations and official government figures, some 102,000 migrants have arrived on Italian shores since the start of the year while nearly 135,000 have arrived in Greece. Most of those making the dangerous Mediterranean crossing are from war torn countries or fleeing violence and poverty in parts of the Middle East and Africa.

At least 2,300 people have died this year alone making the crossing, according to the latest figures issued by the International Organization for Migration.

