

Hundreds of boat people dead and missing

by UPI

ATHENS, Greece -- Refugee officials said more than 400 Somalians and Ethiopians have died this year and as many are missing in treacherous sea journeys. An estimated 66 people drowned Sunday in the Gulf of Aden after smugglers forced them overboard off the coast of Yemen, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said Tuesday. The victims had left on two boats from the Somali coastal town of Bossaso with 244 people in all aboard. More than 20,000 refugees this year have tried to cross the Gulf of Aden in often unseaworthy boats operated by smugglers in Somali port cities and towns, UNHCR said. In waters off Greece, more than 100 people, including children, have been reported dead or missing this year after refugees tried to cross from Turkey to Samos, Lesbos and Chios in Greece. The number of people arrested, intercepted or rescued by the Greek coast guard in the Aegean averages about 3,000 a year but jumped to nearly 6,750 this year on just the islands of Samos and Lesbos, UNHCR reported.

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