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Two boat tragedies leave migrants dead and missing off Europe's shores

Separate boating incidents putting the lives of dozens of migrants at risk in the Aegean Sea today are a tragic reminder of the dangers faced by people seeking to reach Europe's borders, Amnesty International said.

A search and rescue operation continues off the Turkish coastal city Bodrum, where a boat believed to have 13 migrants on board went missing early this morning.

Also today the Greek coastguard rescued 21 migrants who fell from a rubber boat carrying 46 people near the island of Chios. One of the migrants was unconscious when pulled out of the sea and was later pronounced dead.

"The sad truth is that we're likely to see more tragic incidents like these as migrants and asylum-seekers flee economic hardship and conflict with the hopes of finding safety and a better life in Europe," said Jezerca Tigani, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia Programme.

"The land and sea borders between Turkey and Greece are a key crossing point, and the route across the Aegean has become more popular since last August after the land border was reinforced with a fence and some 2,000 armed guards. But as we've seen again today, this shift has its price. Since last August more than 100 people – mostly Syrians and Afghans, including pregnant women and children – have lost their lives in this stretch of water."

"The Turkish and Greek authorities must be vigilant and prepared to carry out more search and rescue operations in the future."

Earlier this year, Amnesty International collected testimonies from migrants and asylum-seekers who said that the Greek Coastguard intercepted them on the Aegean and pushed their boats back towards Turkey. Such push-backs are both unlawful and dangerous and must stop.