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Boat With 180 People Sinks on Volga, at Least One Dead

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A passenger boat with more than 180 people aboard sank on the Volga River in Tatarstan on Sunday, killing at least one person, injuring two and leaving 15 missing, officials said.

The boat sank in the middle of the river, and a woman drowned and her body was delivered to a hospital, said Marat Rakhmatullin, a spokesman for the regional branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry.

A total of 135 passengers and 47 crew were on board when the double-decker went down some three kilometers away from the nearest bank, said ministry spokeswoman Irina Andrianova. The depth at the site was 20 meters.

Andrianova said in televised remarks that 15 people were still missing.

The Volga, Europe's largest river in terms of length and discharge, is up to 30 kilometers wide. The river is a popular tourist destination, especially in summer months. Most of Russia's largest cities are located along its banks.

More than 80 passengers were picked up by a passing ship, and many others made it to the bank on improvised rafts or were rescued by emergency workers.

The boat, called Bulgaria, was made in the late 1950s in Czechoslovakia and belongs to a local tourism company. It was going to Kazan from the town of Bulgar.

A tourism expert said the lack of partitions inside the Bulgaria made it vulnerable to breaches.

"In case of an accident these ships sink within minutes," said Dmitry Voropayev, head of the Samara Travel company, RIA-Novosti reported.

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