

# TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

## 61 Haitians recovered from capsized boat

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The bodies of 61 Haitian migrants who died when their boat capsized off the coast of the Turks and Caicos have been recovered, island authorities said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Haitian migrants who survived the ordeal claimed a Turks and Caicos naval vessel rammed their sailboat twice before it capsized, a senior Haitian official told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Jeanne Bernard Pierre, the director-general of Haiti's National Migration Office, said the migrants' account hasn't been confirmed but that Haiti would consider it "criminal" if found true, the AP reported Tuesday.

They were among an estimated 160 migrants crammed into a sailboat that tipped over as it was reportedly being towed into shore by island police.

The most decomposed bodies will be buried on the British territory. The remaining corpses will be returned to Haiti, Turks and Caicos Police Inspector Hilton Duncan said. The island's government will pay for the burials and transport.

The 30-foot sailboat, packed with Haitians fleeing their homeland, was reportedly being towed by a Turks police patrol boat when rough seas caused it to capsize two miles south of Providenciales island last Friday.

Some 78 survivors were taken to a detention facility on the British territory. They will be repatriated later this week, police said.

Haitians in the Five Cays neighborhood in Providenciales said the boat left the northern city of Cap-Haitien last week, and that some of the passengers were relatives who paid thousands of dollars for the trip to the Turks and Caicos. The islands serve as a stopping point for Haitians trying to escape crushing poverty in their homeland.