Search Resumes after Ferry Sank off Indonesia

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JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Rescuers continued to search Indonesian waters Thursday for people reported missing after a ferry collided with another ship and sank, with officials fearing some were trapped in cars on the wrecked vessel.

At least eight people were killed in Wednesday's accident, most likely drowning after jumping into the sea without life jackets, said Heru Purwanto, an official at Bakauheni port on southern Sumatra.

More than 210 passengers and crew were rescued in the hours after the accident, but an unknown number are feared missing.

The ferry manifest listed 213 passengers and crew and 78 vehicles on the ferry, but manifests are often unreliable in Indonesia because tickets are sold onboard to passengers who are never registered.

The search for survivors was continuing after many family members came forward to report the names of missing loved ones.

Some passengers were believed to be inside vehicles parked on the ferry when it sank, said Budi Harto, who heads the local disaster management agency in Lampung province. He said divers were facing a difficult task due to the location of the wreck, which was in waters as deep as 90 meters (295 feet).

The other ship in the accident was not seriously damaged. Singapore-based Norgas Carriers Pte. Ltd. said in a statement that the propylene chemical the ship was carrying did not leak and there was no pollution caused by the accident.

The accident happened about 40 minutes into the ferry's 90-minute journey between Java and Sumatra islands.

The ferry sank 20 minutes after the captain sent a distress signal, but that was enough time to allow 10 merchant ships sailing nearby to immediately start rescuing passengers and crew, Purwanto said.

More than 80 passengers were hospitalized with injuries, including at least one in critical condition.

Ferries are a major source of transportation in Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago nation, with more than 17,000 islands and a population of 240 million. Sea accidents are common due to overcrowding and poor safety standards.

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