

Divers find 'no leaks' from fuel-laden ship sunk off Tunisia

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The crew of the Xelo issued a distress call and sought shelter in Tunisian waters from bad weather before the vessel went down.

Divers who inspected the hull of a tanker loaded with 750 tonnes of fuel

that sank off southeast Tunisia detected no leaks on Sunday, officials said.

The Equatorial Guinea-flagged Xelo, which sank Saturday in the Gulf of Gabes, has settled on its side at a depth of almost 20 metres (65 feet), the environment ministry said.

"No leak has been detected," it said in a statement.

The inspection was carried out by divers accompanied by the ship's captain and engineer, said Mohamed Karray, spokesman for a court in Gabes city that is investigating the sinking.

The Xelo was travelling from Egypt to Malta when it went down.

With the scene sealed off by Tunisia's military, the [defence ministry](#) released pictures showing the vessel submerged on its side.

The crew of the Xelo had issued a distress call on Friday evening and sought shelter in Tunisian waters from [bad weather](#) before going down.

Tunisian authorities rescued the seven-member crew, who received first aid and were moved to a hotel.

Transport Minister Rabie Majidi said Sunday that [rescue workers](#) had checked during the operation that the valves were closed, and the team of divers ensured they were sealed and intact.



A tanker carrying 750 tonnes of diesel fuel from Egypt to Malta sank Saturday in the Gulf of Gabes off Tunisia's southeast coast.

"The situation is not dangerous, the outlook is positive, the ship is stable because luckily it ran aground on sand," he told reporters.

The minister said the priority was to pump the [diesel fuel](#) and prevent any spillage or pollution.

An Italian ship specialised in cleaning up marine pollution will be sent alongside a team of divers to aid with efforts, an Italian official said.

As a precaution, protective booms have already been placed around the wreck.

Environment Minister Leila Chikhaoui has also been at the scene in the port of Gabes to follow up on the incident.

Tunisian officials are investigating the itinerary of the tanker, which reportedly has Turkish and Libyan owners.

The Tunisia branch of the World Wildlife Fund has expressed concern about another "environmental catastrophe" in the region, an important fishing zone.



Divers from the Tunisian navy at the scene of the sunken Xelo vessel, off the Gulf of Gabes, in southeastern Tunisia.

The tanker is 58 metres (63 yards) long and nine metres wide, according to ship monitoring website vesseltracker.com.

It began taking on water around seven kilometres (four miles) offshore in the Gulf of Gabes and the engine room was engulfed, according to the environment ministry.

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