

Egypt death toll rises to 21 in Nile collision

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CAIRO: Egypt's health ministry said thursday that the death toll from a collision of two boats on the Nile, the night before has risen to 21, after two more bodies were retrieved from the river.

Health ministry spokesman Hossam Abdel-Ghaffar told The Associated Press the search for the victims continued into thursday as families of missing passengers were still looking for their loved ones.

Abdel-Ghaffar said no less than seven children were among those who drowned, including a 2-year-old and a 3-year-old.

He said it was not clear how many passengers were on the boat when it was hit by a scow late Wednesday near Cairo.

The state-owned Al-Ahram online newspaper said the families of the missing had blocked a main road in Warraq, the district where the boat sunk, briefly clashing with security forces, which finally broke up the protest. There were no reports of casualties.

Initially, 15 bodies were recovered and four were rescued.

The interior ministry had said the boat was damaged from the collision, causing it to sink.

Prosecutor Khaled Abdel-Hameed ordered the scow's captain and his assistant detained, accusing them of manslaughter.

Nile traffic has been heavy, especially near Cairo, as Egyptians celebrated the Eid ul-Fitr holiday following the holy month of Ramadan.

Nile rides are among favorite pastimes during the holidays but many city dwellers also use the passenger boats for travel along the Nile.

- AP