

《中国领导人就沉船事故向韩国致慰问电》

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Chinese president Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang have sent their condolences to families of the passengers who died after South Korean passenger ferry "Sewol" capsized. Xi said China was following the case closely, and was willing to provide help if needed in the search for those still unaccounted for.

The Chinese consulate in the South Korean city of Kwangju has confirmed that two Chinese citizens were on board the ferry which sank off the southwestern coast of South Korea on Wednesday. The consulate has not ruled out the possibility of there being more Chinese nationals on board.

South Korean passenger ship was on an overnight journey to the tourist island of Jeju, when it overturned and sank off the coast of Jindo Island with 475 people on board. Nine people have been confirmed dead, and at least 287 are still missing.

South Korea's coast guard says rapid currents and low underwater visibility have hampered their rescue efforts. The current water temperature is also cold enough to cause hypothermia after about one hour of exposure. 30 helicopters and 170 ships are taking part in the search and rescue efforts.