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## FIA Nabs Five Human Traffickers in Lahore Crackdown

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The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Lahore has arrested five human traffickers, including a key suspect linked to the 2023 Greece boat tragedy, in a major operation to curb illegal migration networks.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore Zone has apprehended five individuals involved in human trafficking, including a primary suspect tied to the tragic 2023 Greece boat capsizing, as reported by ARY News. The suspects, identified as Sibtain Abbas, Bilal Ahmad, Waseem Azam, Muhammad Riaz, and Muhammad Aamir Farooq, were detained

during raids in Lahore and Sheikhpura. According to an FIA spokesperson, Sibtain Abbas allegedly extorted Rs 1.7 million from a victim by promising an Italian work visa, only for the boat carrying the victim to sink in Greek waters, leaving the individual missing. Bilal Ahmad reportedly defrauded another citizen of Rs 630,000 under the pretense of securing a Qatar work visa, then went into hiding after failing to deliver.

The arrests are part of a broader crackdown ordered by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, who has prioritized dismantling human trafficking networks following the June 2023 Greece boat tragedy, which claimed over 250 Pakistani lives. The FIA stated that the suspects were part of an organized smuggling ring that exploited vulnerable citizens seeking better opportunities abroad. The agency has registered 54 cases related to the incident and frozen the bank accounts of 41 traffickers, as per Dunya News. Director FIA Lahore Zone, Sarfaraz Virk, emphasized that operations against such networks are ongoing, with a commitment to strict legal consequences for those involved.

The 2023 tragedy, where an overcrowded vessel sank near Pylos, Greece, highlighted the dangers of illegal migration routes. The FIA's efforts include coordination with families of victims to identify missing persons through DNA matching, as noted in a statement to The Express Tribune. Raids continue in Gujranwala and Faisalabad to apprehend additional suspects. The agency's actions underscore a resolve to hold accountable those profiting from human desperation, with Prime Minister Sharif calling human trafficking a "disgrace to Pakistan worldwide," according to The Nation. The FIA urges citizens to report suspicious activities to prevent further tragedies.