

borderline-europe, Sicily

SCIROCCO

News from Italy



Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-Schirokko] is a southeastern, hot strong wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean to Sicily and up to Italy's north often for a few hours only. This newsflash has been published on an approximately bi-weekly basis since March 2021.

Political and social situation

Preliminary hearing against Iuventa / Jugend Rettet, MSF, Save the Children and Vroon ends in Catania

Good News!

On Friday, 19.04.2024, after a total of seven years, the preliminary hearing against the defendants of the four organizations/companies ended with the closure of the trial. Several rescue missions in the years 2016-2017 were interpreted by the Italian public prosecutor's office as "smuggling", whereupon the accused (members of the Iuventa crew and members of Doctors Without Borders & Save the Children) were suspected of "aiding and abetting irregular immigration" and faced prison sentences of up to 20 years. Information on the background of the charges and a detailed account of the investigations and court hearings can be found on [our homepage](#).



It is over! In front of the court in Trapani

Italy's right wing parties are getting ready for the EU parliamentary elections

The parties are preparing for the upcoming [EU parliamentary elections](#), which will take place in Italy on June 8th and 9th: Party leader and current Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani will run for

Forza Italia. Italy's current Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, will announce her candidacy for the post-fascist party Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi) on April 28th; however, it is still uncertain whether Matteo Salvini will run for the Lega. **So far, no common "strategy" of the right-wing parties is apparent:** the Fdi is building its election campaign on Meloni's previous policies and can count on good poll ratings - particularly in migration policy. Meanwhile the Lega is not campaigning person-related but focuses on Eurosceptic and anti-European voters in a common list with the Unione di Centro (Udc). Forza Italia is trying to reach the "moderate" conservative spectrum and is using the popularity of the Berlusconi family to campaign for Tajani.

New EU asylum and migration pact adopted

After a long debate, the [EU-Parliament](#) voted in favor of the **reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)** on April 10, which is seen as the final undermining of the European asylum system: CEAS signals **the end of rights for migrants***. The contents of the CEAS can be read in detail [here](#) and [here](#). One of the most important [changes](#) is the establishment of "**border centers**" at the so-called EU external borders, where people are housed while their asylum applications are processed. As part of an **exhaustive screening procedure**, which includes identity and fingerprinting as well as health and security checks, migrants will be informed within five days whether they can remain in the EU or will be deported.

The basic principles of the Dublin Regulation remain in force. In addition, a solidarity mechanism between the EU member states has been established, although the solidarity measures are very vague. The decision to maintain the Dublin procedure is a defeat for the Italian government, which had campaigned for mandatory distribution quotas. "To put it clearly, a true reform should have led by unanimity to the removal of the rules of the Dublin Regulation. It should have put the focus on the human being and their fundamental rights. It should be based on the principle of hospitality in all its aspects. Contrary to what the supporters of the New Pact on Migration believe, the European Parliament currently seems to be aiming to reform

the European system **by strengthening the mechanisms for protecting the EU's borders**, says lawyer [Giuseppina Di Salvatore](#).



Plan of the Hotspots in Porto Empedocle, Sizilien

Unfortunately, it is to be feared that the reforms of the CEAS will lead to **even more deaths when people flee**, because the conditions for fleeing on land and at sea will deteriorate and the criminalization of sea rescue will not be ended. [Harlem Désir](#), Vice-Chairman of the European section of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), explains that “the pact does not clarify the responsibilities of states regarding sea rescue, nor does it provide support for the organizations that implement it and come to the aid of shipwrecked persons. **He seems to forget the law of the sea.** It is to be feared that states will continue to obstruct rescue operations, extend the route of the boats, block them in ports and criminalize non-governmental organizations in order to make their work more difficult.”

Instead, the pact provides for a system to detain people who arrive “irregularly” at the European Union's borders. The transfer of responsibility for a search and rescue (SAR) zone to Tunisia, Egypt and Mauritania could further exacerbate existing problems in operations and the coordination of rescue operations at sea, as in the case of Libya, which proclaimed its own SAR zone in 2018. The CEAS reforms are also firmly rejected from a legal perspective: according to the [Association for Legal Studies on Immigration \(ASGI\)](#), asylum seekers in

Europe “no longer have an effective right to a full examination of their application for international protection and can be systematically detained at the Union's external borders”. This **violation of applicable EU law** “has been repeatedly condemned by the European courts, as illustrated by the ECtHR's condemnation of Italy for the unlawful and degrading detention in the Lampedusa hotspot or the deliberate detention of minors in the Taranto hotspot”.

Political situation in Albania

The construction of the **new Italian reception center in Albania** has been delayed and it is becoming clear that the official costs - estimated at around 150 million euros per year for five years - will not be enough to cover the transport of migrants, health care and the “unlimited subcontracting”. Partito Democratico (Pd), [Matteo Mauri](#) criticized the costs, which have now risen to well over 700 million euros, describing them as “disproportionate expenditure for an initiative that is considered completely unnecessary”.

In its April 21 issue, the [Politmagazin Report](#) even revealed costs of around one billion euros (over five years). In this context, the [Italian government](#) under Giorgia Meloni also announced **the construction of two new (deportation detention) centers with a maximum capacity of 3,000 places in Albania** (see previous issues of Scirocco).



Entrance of the Hotspot Porto Empedocle

Situation of refugees

Poor implementation of asylum law in Italy

According to a new [report](#) by the International Rescue Committee Italy (IRC), produced in collaboration with Le Carbet, Mutuo Soccorso Milano, Naga, Asgi and Intersos, many people seeking protection are refused asylum by the immigration authorities (questura) or applications for international protection are not processed in time: In Milan, for example, **only a quarter of people managed to get an appointment with the Questura** to apply for international protection.



State reception center for asylum seekers Caltanissetta, Sicily

These delays would violate international protection legislation and lead to a further deterioration of the precarious living conditions of those seeking protection, as they would not be able to find accommodation or formal employment through the reception system or access other rights associated with applying for international protection.

The IRC is calling for the government and local organizations to not only be provided with sufficient financial resources to process applications in time, but also to ensure that all those affected "regardless of their nationality, language spoken, socio-economic situation, digital literacy or other circumstances" can apply for international protection, **that procedures are harmonized nationwide** and that **minimum standards are set for the procedures for registering applications for**

protection. Flaminia Delle Cese, legal and advocacy advisor at IRC Italia, emphasizes that giving people fleeing conflict, violence and persecution the opportunity to apply for international protection is not only a legal obligation, but also an act of humanity. Instead, it is clear that this is "a denied right".

Unacceptable conditions in detention centers (CPR)

About 500 migrants are currently being held in the eight detention centers (CPR) operating in Italy - many of them without having committed a crime. The detention conditions in the CPRs are inhuman and the threat of deportation (which often does not take place) is mentally tormenting. Nevertheless, **the possible length of detention has been increased from three to 18 months.** A [delegation from the Tavolo Asilo e Immigrazione](#), which was recently able to visit the centers together with some opposition MPs, once again noted "serious hygiene and sanitary deficiencies, untreated illnesses, severe abuse of psychotropic drugs and daily self-harm". In addition, there are hardly any cultural mediators, no opportunity to speak to lawyers and food is served in the cells even when there are canteens (see similar reports in previous issues of this newsletter).

The CPRs are "places of detention", according to the representatives of the Asylum and Immigration Council, "where the rights provided for detainees in Italian prisons are not guaranteed". They call for the closure of the centers, as they are "**places of denial of rights in the light of failing policies**", which include "waste of public money, more than 40 deaths, **systematic violence** and dozens of suicide attempts". It was only at the beginning of February 2024 that 22-year-old Guinean Ousmane took his own life in the CPR Ponte Galeria in Rome (we reported [here](#)) because the survival conditions there are unbearable and the state systematically deprives people of any hope of a life in dignity.

The president of Naga, [Riccardo Tromba](#), announced a new **report to the Milan prosecutors' office against the CPR in Milan.** Naga is an association that has been working for years on the immigration and detention conditions at the CPR in Via Corelli in Milan and had already filed a

complaint against the facility in December 2023 due to the catastrophic conditions at the CPR. The new complaint concerns the violence with which Guardia di Finanza (financial police) officers reacted to protests by detained migrants and self-harm incidents that occurred between February 10



Deportation detention Caltanissetta, Sizilien

and 18, Tromba explained in an interview with the daily newspaper [il manifesto](#). The incidents are detailed in the complaint with audio, video and photographic evidence. Naga is demanding the closure of the CPR, as the provisional management has not made any improvements to the facility even after inspections and investigations by the justice.

It shows that “the CPRs cannot be reformed, even if they are investigated by the justice system. The CPR in Milan shows that history is repeating itself. **Every temporary closure is followed by a reopening under even worse conditions.** People are right to defend themselves against an absurd situation, an incomprehensible detention that is more cruel than a prison. (...) The CPR create new problems for those who already have problems and they bring suffering where there is already suffering. (...) These facilities are increasingly becoming 'social dumping grounds' and **instruments of social control,**” says Tromba.

Following a visit to the CPR in Bari-Palese, [Marco Lacarra](#), MP for the Democratic Party (Pd), also spoke out clearly against the conditions in the detention centers. He called for greater public attention, an increase in resources and a fundamental examination of the CPR system. Despite the great public criticism of the CPR, it was

decided **to construct a new detention center in Liguria**, which is expected to be built in the former Camandone barracks in Diano Castello. The „[No CPR](#)“ committee, which includes the mayors of the municipalities of Golfo Dianese as well as professional associations and citizens, reiterated its opposition to “the decision taken at ministerial level”. The committee will meet as soon as possible to determine further opposing measures, according to their [statement](#). With the adaptation of the new Common European Asylum System (CEAS) on April 10, 2024 by the EU's European Chamber, Italian [Interior minister Matteo Piantedosi](#) announced another “extraordinary plan to identify areas” for the construction of new CPRs. Although Piantedosi claims that there is a “strong correlation” between the number of deportations and the places available in the facilities, the [police headquarters](#) issued 28,983 deportation orders last year, of which “only” 4,368 were actually carried out.

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found under „projects“ on our [Homepage](#), in previous issues of [Scirocco](#) and in our [Spotlight Italy – Zones of Lawlessness](#)“.

End of April our new Spotlight „Kosmos Palermo“ will be published on our homepage.

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