

COVID19 - Update of the situation in Italy



borderline-europe, Sicily – Part 11

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Political/Social Situation

- The "application deadline" for the [legalization of employed migrants](#) expired on August 15. Just over 200,000, or barely a third of the target group affected by the regulation, were successfully legalized. The result is disappointing. Of the 207,542 applications received by the Foreign Ministry, about 85% concerned domestic work and personal assistance, while only 15% concerned employment in other sectors. The regularization of agricultural workers, who are often exploited and forced to work in inhumane conditions in fields in southern Italy, could hardly be achieved. Lombardy is the region from which most applications for domestic work and personal assistance were made (47,357), while the first place for menial labor is in Campania (6,962). As a reminder, this scheme was created only because of the Corona crisis, as the Italian government was afraid that the services provided by migrants would no longer be fulfilled.
- On August 17, the Italian Interior Minister Lucia Lamorgese and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Luigi Di Maio visited Tunis, accompanied by EU Commissioners Ylva Johansson and Oliver Varhelji. In the end, it was taken the decision to release [11 million euros](#), from one of the funds saved for the reception of migrants, for Tunisia. This money will be used by the country to strengthen the control of its maritime borders as for the maintenance of patrol boats, the training of security forces, radar and an information system that will alert the gendarmerie immediately when migrant boats are at sea in order to block them directly in Tunisian waters. Currently, most arrivals in Sicily are from Tunisia.
- In Sicily, regional president Nello Musumeci berates the central government in Rome for creating concentration camps for migrants. His right-wing slogans against fugitives strike at the heart of the fearful population, since the Covid numbers are rising massively, especially in the south. What could be simpler than labeling refugees and migrants as scapegoats? [A little analysis from borderline-europe](#).
- [Peppe Provenzano](#), Minister of the South and Territorial Unity of Italy, responds sharply to Musumeci's accusations. If Musumeci wanted to resolve the problems instead of only using them for his political campaign, he could join the Ministry of the Interior, which is already actively involved in trying to tackle the difficult situation. ... It remains to be seen whether the central government will actually present a proper solution.
- At a [summit in Rome](#), where the mayor of Lampedusa Martello and the regional president of Sicily Musumeci met with Premier Conte, it was decided to relieve the Lampedusa hotspot and to increase deportation flights to Tunisia. In addition, the patrols at sea are to be increased. Since September 2nd, there is a new Tunisian government that might be eligible for negotiating further agreements.

Situation of the Migrants

- The [Pozzallo reception center](#) was inspected, afterwards also other hotspots and homes will be inspected, checked for hygiene standards and closed if necessary. Surprisingly, it was concluded

that the hotspot [should be closed](#) due to the unsustainable conditions. Refugee organizations have been demanding this for years, the situation on-site is no news. But now the Sicilian regional president is calling for action.

- On September 3, the [closure of the hotspot on Lampedusa](#) was also announced. The migrants will be transferred to quarantine ships. For this purpose, at least two additional ships will be rented (in addition to the already existing three ships). It is more than questionable whether this can ease up the situation in the hotspot Lampedusa in the long run, as the people will have to be brought ashore after the quarantine period - either they will have to be transferred to other boats again or the quarantine ships will sail to Sicily, in this case they would be missing in Lampedusa. Moreover, the criticism of quarantine ships by itself, remains.
- As Borderline Sicilia and the ARCI Porco Rosso in Palermo report, many Tunisians find themselves at train stations without a place to stay. Since they have no money, they cannot take the train. After the dismissal from the quarantine on the ships, they don't know where to go, authorities only urge them to leave the country.
- Similar scenes can be observed in [Ventimiglia](#) by the Italian-French border. Many people, including families with small children, are forced to sleep on the streets.
- But also the situation in the centers is marked by unworthy conditions. Pictures from Borderline Sicilia show the conditions in a [reception center near Caltanissetta](#). The hygienic conditions are unsustainable, especially with regard to the Corona Pandemic. The [visit of a commission in the hotspot Lampedusa](#) brought similar results: "in it's current condition the facility would already be unsuitable for 200 people, which represents the eligible number of people in the center. Whole pavilions are uninhabitable, people sleep outside, under the trees. The medical care is completely inadequate. In some corners there is no floor, but a human carpet".

Situation on the Central Mediterranean

- The [new ship Louise Michel](#), financed by the English artist Banksy, saves first 89 and then another 130 people. Approximately 150 people were then taken over by the Sea Watch 4, the sea rescue ship of the Protestant Church, 49 by the Italian coast guard.
- The "Seewatch 4" had departed from the Spanish port of Burriana on August 16th. Because of the Corona pandemic and the lockdown in Spain, the first mission was delayed for almost four months. Nevertheless, the Green EU politician Sven Giegold speaks of a "[start-up speed](#)" with which our church has acted here". He is one of the initiators of the petition, which immediately received support among the church's leadership. "The ship will increase the pressure on politicians to put an end to the dying in the Mediterranean".
- After taking over the refugees from the Louise Michel, the Sea Watch 4 has now [arrived in Palermo with 353 rescued people on board](#). All migrants will be transferred to the new quarantine ship GNV Allegra. Refugee activists gather on the shore to welcome the Sea Watch, which is located close to the port.



- Meanwhile the [right-wing LEGA is threatening to sue the government](#) for aiding and abetting illegal entry in case the entering of the Sea Watch in Palermo should be allowed. At an event in Savona, northern Italy, Salvini argued, whoever would support the arrival of migrants in Savona, should himself take the migrant home. This type of argument is clearly about the upcoming regional elections, as made obvious here: "The security is not a question of right or left, being able to go out in the evening, especially as a woman, to put on a miniskirt, for example, that is the sacred right of every girl. Every voice that goes to the LEGA is a slap on the shoulder for me, because if I have to go to court next month, 60 million Italians are behind me.
- While the flight movement towards Lampedusa continues, hundreds of migrants have boarded on [two quarantine ships](#) for a two-week quarantine isolation. Both ships are currently moored shortly before Trapani. It is still unclear whether the Tunisian women arriving on the boat will be deported directly.
- [45 people died in a shipping accident off the coast of Libya](#). The accident is thus "the largest registered shipwreck off the coast of Libya this year," according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Among the victims are said to be five children. The two organizations called for an immediate review of the incident and an expansion of the search and rescue capacities on site. According to IOM, about 37 survivors - mainly from Senegal, Mali, Chad and Ghana - were rescued by local fishermen and arrested after their arrival on land. According to their report, the ship's engine had exploded off the coast of the northwestern city of Zuwara. Most migrants venture the dangerous crossing to Europe in unseaworthy rubber boats. According to the two organizations, at least 302 refugees have died in the illegal repatriations to Libya this year alone. The actual number of fatalities, however, is estimated to be much higher.
- At least [364 children and minors have so far this year been intercepted](#) in the Mediterranean as they tried to enter Europe and, according to the IOM, were forced to return to Libya. They were among the more than 7,000 refugees who were repatriated in 2020 after unsuccessfully trying to make the journey. When disembarking in Libya, it is just as likely that children and minors, such as adults will be locked up in detention camps for an indefinite period. The centers have been repeatedly condemned by human rights groups whose staff has documented cases of extortion, rape, abuse and neglect, while Pope Francis recently compared them to concentration camps.
- After the arrival of 370 people on Lampedusa, the reception center, which are designed for several hundred people, is completely overloaded. At times there are over 1500 migrants in the hotspot. Even despite some transfers into other accommodations, there are still [more than a thousand refugees on Lampedusa](#), until the end of august.

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found in our Newsletter 'Spotlight Italy' and previous Corona Updates on our homepage <https://www.borderline-europe.de/projekte/newsletter-italien>