

COVID19 - Update Italy

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Politically/Socially

- On September 27th, it was celebrated the official 'Day of the Refugees'. Although the Corona measures did not allow mass events, there were some symbolic initiatives to express solidarity. Especially representatives from church expressed strong criticism on the current events. [Pope Francis](#) announced serious accusations: "Thousands are being intercepted at sea and forced back to prison camps where they suffer torture and mistreatment. Many of them are victims of human trafficking, sexual slavery or forced labor, exploited in humiliating tasks without a fair wage. All this is unbearable, but today it is a reality that many people deliberately ignore!" He appeals to the United Nations to use the situation as an opportunity to take action in order to create a more humanitarian society.
- The demand of the Regional President of Sicily, [Nello Musumeci](#), to evacuate all hotspots and reception centers in Sicily, was finally rejected. The politician had taken the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to promote a campaign against the presence of refugees and migrants in Sicily. The court in Palermo has now finally decided to drop Musumeci's demands.

Situation in the Central Mediterranean

- In the port of Palermo the situation worsened increasingly in recent weeks. On board of the [Open Arms](#), 76 people jumped off the ship, and followed by another 48 people the very next day. Fortunately, all of them could be safely salvaged. They were then taken to a quarantine ship together with those who had remained on board. [60 of them tested positive](#) for the coronavirus.
- The Forum Antirazzista Palermo organized an event for this purpose. ➤ [You can find the report here.](#)
- The Open Arms itself, on the other hand, was fortunately [released by the authorities](#) after a two weeks stay in the port of Palermo, during which it underwent inspections.
- Meanwhile, the official quarantine ended for the 353 people rescued by Sea Watch 4, many of whom went ashore in Palermo. The Sea Watch 4 was subsequently detained by the Italian authorities. A total of 22 deficiencies were listed, including: unauthorized lifebelts and deck mounted toilets with direct 'outboard discharge'.
- On 25.09.2020 the Italian rescue ship [Mare Jonio](#) was also effectively blocked. Allegedly, the tasks of two of the crew members was not compatible with the purpose of the ship, they were not allowed to sail: "Despite the fine words and proclamations, we are again in the situation that all the sea rescue ships organized by civil society are under blockade. This time not because of Salvini's security decrees, but thanks to an endless sequence of unjustified administrative motives," says Casarini, head of mission on the Mare Jonio. The coastguard indicated that the ship was not blocked.
- The [Alan Kurdi](#) arrived in Sardinia with 125 rescued people on board. Eight people had already been evacuated before for health reasons. However, the arrival at the port of Olbia was not very peaceful, the people went ashore under the protest of supporters of the Lega and violent [racist insults](#). Fortunately there were also people who showed soli-

curity and welcomed the [56 minors on board with toys](#). All persons are now in quarantine in various centers in Sardinia. 10 of them tested positive for the [corona virus](#).

- In the meantime the situation on the quarantine ships is also very critical. There was an increase in [suicide attempts](#) by people who, in their desperation, jumped off board.

Situation of Migrants

- After the end of the quarantine, the migrants are being left on their own. As it was the case recently in Porto Empedocle, province of Agrigento, where 900 people were released from quarantine. The [mayor of the village started a protest](#) and tried unsuccessfully to prevent the arrival. 500 people, mostly Tunisian nationals, received an exit order stating that they had to leave Italy within 7 days. They tried to reach the nearest [train station](#) by foot, hoping to make it to the north. The rest of the people were taken to other shelters.
- In one of the largest private reception facilities in Palermo, the [Biagio Conte centers](#), there was a breakout of Covid19 infections. A total of 125 people have tested positive. The facilities were subsequently declared red - i.e. restricted - zones. For many years now, homeless people, most of them migrants, have only found a roof over their heads in the Biagio Conte facilities. But they are hopelessly overcrowded, it was only a question of time until the [virus would have spread](#).
- In a reception center in Sikuliana (Agrigento), where a young man was killed in an escape attempt in early September, people have again escaped. The police is currently searching for the approximately [40 people](#).

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