

# COVID19 - Update Italy

## borderline-europe, Sicily - PART 14



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### Politically/Socially

- On October 3, Italy celebrated the Commemoration day for those deceased in the Mediterranean. The very same day started the trial of former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in Catania. He is accused for 'kidnapping' in the [Gregoretti case](#). In the summer of 2019, he had forbidden the Italian coast guard ship to bring rescued migrants, including unaccompanied minors, ashore. In spite of the measures taken against Covid-19, many people protested on the streets to demonstrate both *for* and *against* Salvini. The trial was postponed until November 20, in order to await a hearing of Conte and De Maio.

### Situation in the Central Mediterranean

- After the people rescued by NGO vessel Alan Kurdi (Sea Eye) were able to go ashore in Sardinia, where they are currently passing their quarantine period, the [Italian authorities have once again seized the ship](#). "The inspections that resulted in the measures of 5th May and 9th October were both carried out by the same officers, even though the ship was in two different and distant ports," says Valentin Schatz, Sea Eye's advisor. "So it is clear that the inspections were politically motivated". This is also confirmed by the fact that the merchant vessel 'Asso29', which saved 67 people, was not forced to do quarantine.
- On the quarantine ships there have been more and more cases of [people jumping from the ships](#) and risking their lives. As happened in [Augusta](#) where three people jumped off board. One of the three was recovered at sea by the Guardia di Finanza (customs); a second was found in the morning on the highway. The third is missing.
- [The case of 15-year-old Abou Dakite](#), who died last week in a hospital in Palermo, showed how serious the situation actually is. Two years earlier he had fled from the Ivory Coast, after a long journey his ship was saved by the Open Arms. After 10 days on board, the fugitives were transferred to the quarantine ship Allegra, where Abou suffered for 12 days. Only when his condition deteriorated to such an extent that he fell into a coma was he taken from the ship to a hospital. Abou's body showed traces of torture, dehydration and malnutrition. He died shortly afterwards.
- Forum Antirazzista organized a commemoration event in the center of Palermo. Candles and speeches were used to farewell Abou and to denounce the injustice of his death. "No quarantine at sea for migrants! The imprisonment of people without legal basis and under inadequate conditions cannot be justified. Covid-19 can also be combatted on land. Abou, 15 years old, is a victim of this cruel and ineffective system" says [Amnesty International, Italy](#).



- After the incident, the voices against the use of quarantine ships become louder and louder. Claudia Lodesani of [Doctors without Borders](#) says the ships were "no solution for

Covid-19, as there is a very high risk on board that outbreaks will spread further". In fact, the cases, as for example on the GNV Rhapsody, are multiplying rapidly.

- In addition, there are more and more reports of people who already have a regular permission of residence in Italy but are still being taken to the quarantine ships. This is the case for [a young man from Ghana](#) who has been living in Italy for seven years and was brought on board after he was tested positive for the virus. "I am in a cabin with two other people, it is a very small room. We cannot go outside, we can only take the food with us, but we have to eat it in the cabin. I haven't seen a doctor here yet, nobody has visited me" he says.
- The Association for Legal Studies on Immigration has described such practices as '[illegal and discriminatory](#)'.

### Situation of Migrants

- At the same time there are reports of revolts throughout the country in various centers. [A center in Agrigento had to close](#) after the situation escalated and a fire started. Many of the migrants had ended the quarantine period earlier and had unsuccessfully asked to be transferred to other facilities, until chaos broke out in the evening.
- A detailed Caritas report shows that the pandemic has made migrants and migrant families even poorer and more vulnerable. During the months of the pandemic, they represent [32 percent of the 'new poor'](#) who have applied for assistance by Caritas in Italy.
- In the centers of Biagio Conte, a self-proclaimed priest in Palermo who has been running facilities for homeless people for years, which, due to a strong outbreak of Covid19 cases, had been declared red zones in the previous weeks, [suddenly all persons resulted negative](#). A total of 3000 people underwent the tests. Explanations are still pending. [Arci Porco Rosso](#), an association that actively defends the rights of refugees in Palermo, says "The way the two tests were carried out, the inconsistency of the results obtained and the conditions of the quarantine, which resulted in a mixing of those who tested negative and positive in a precarious environment with limited access to basic services such as medical care and toilets, make it unlikely that all guests who tested positive for the virus in mid-September are now cured".

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