



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicilia – Part 7
Palermo, 01/07/2021



Scirocco - Part 7

Scirocco [ʃiˈrɒkko-Schirokko] is a south-easterly, hot strong wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean to Sicily and Italy's north for often only a few hours. This short info in the age of the pandemic will be published from March 2021 in an approx. bi-weekly rhythm. The Scirocco replaces the Corona Update Italy.

Political and Social Situation

The German and Italian leaders [Angela Merkel](#) and [Mario Draghi](#) agree on the further **externalization of borders to the African continent**: with the help of 8 billion euros from the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Fund (Ndici), the EU wants to shift migratory movements to their countries of transit and origin. The agreement with Turkey, which blocks migratory movements via the Balkan route, is to be renewed, and similar agreements are to be concluded with Morocco, Tunisia and Libya. Furthermore, the EU wants to expand its presence to the Sahel, Mali, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The [draft final document](#) of the EU summit on migration on June 24 and 25 as well as [Draghi's speech](#) to the European Council correspond with these plans. There, Draghi emphasized that borders must be better controlled, the Dublin Regulation must be overcome, and the distribution of migrants must be organized at the European level in order to make immigration to Europe "balanced, efficient and humane". Still, there is no agreement on the **distribution of refugees**. The European Council postponed the discussion of a distribution mechanism until the [fall of 2021](#) and hence to a point in time after the expected increase in arrivals during summer.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Filippo Grandi](#), replied that the application of the "Turkish model" to Libya is unacceptable. In Libya, rescued people are locked up in detention centres and suffer under inhumane conditions.

The church institutions [Comunità Sant'Egidio](#), the [Federation of Evangelical Churches](#), [Tavola Valdese](#) and [Cei-Caritas](#) have jointly organized the evacuation of about 500 migrants who can enter Italy from Libya through **humanitarian corridors**. The Minister of Interior, Luciana Lamorgese, signed this agreement and assured the financial support for 300 migrants by the state. Even if this is good news, the number of entries through the few organized humanitarian corridors is only a drop in the bucket. A European solution for legal entry must be found.

Almost seven months after the **so-called security decrees of former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini** were amended, it appears that they are still being applied in many police stations. An [investigation of 16 police presidios](#) revealed the "total non-application" of the migration law amended under Lamorgese, as well as related serious procedural errors. Thus, thousands of people are still excluded from legal admission to Italy. The authors of the study explain that this blatant non-application of a law exposes the "structural resistance of the state apparatus. Illegal practices, contradictory circulars, applications not received or not taken into account, police requests for documents required by the old decrees but not required by the current law, forgotten additional documents, ignorance of the changes: a confused patchwork that clearly circumvents the law."

The **tragic case of the 130 dead on April 22** (we reported [here](#)) has now been submitted to the [public prosecutor's office in Rome](#) by various NGOs, associations and lawyers. All contacted authorities – and especially the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Rome – are accused of moral and legal failure. In addition, the alliance emphasizes the "fiction" of the Libyan SAR zone.

That Libya was absolutely unsuitable for the administration of its own SAR zone on the Mediterranean Sea would be more than obvious and contributed to the death of the 130 young people. [Current cases of the Alarm Phone](#) show that the national sea rescue control centres have learned nothing from the tragedy on April 22. Distress calls are still being ignored.



The Palermo Manifesto, Demonstration on 25/06/2021

During the last weekend of June, the **Conference of cities "From the Sea to the Cities"** took place in [Palermo](#). Various NGOs and mayors from European Cities participated. The participants demand a future EU migration system that respects the individual right to asylum, involves civil society and [allows cities to accept refugees voluntarily](#). The conference also resulted in the [founding document](#) "33 Cities for a Safe Haven," an appeal to the EU to create legal immigration channels and place the right to protection at the centre of European asylum and migration policy.

Simultaneously to the conference, a sit-in on the Palermo Manifesto (we reported [here](#)) was held at Palermo's sailing port, supported by over 60 organizations.

About Rescue at Sea

Due to the **absence of civilian rescue ships**, the humanitarian situation in the Mediterranean Sea continues to worsen. The Geo Barents (Médecins Sans Frontières) has [rescued](#)

[410 people](#) in various operations and had to wait seven days for the allocation of a safe port before it was allowed to enter Augusta (Sicily). The number of independent arrivals in Lampedusa also continues to rise.

In mid-June, [170 refugees were rescued](#) from the merchant ship Vos Triton. Against their will, the rescued were subsequently handed over to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard and **illegally returned to Libya**. Sea-Watch's aircraft [Seabird](#) and the [Alarm Phone](#) observed this illegal repatriation and alerted the coast guards, unfortunately without success. The [UNHCR and the IOM](#) condemned this incident.

Only a few days later, another [20 people](#) were illegally returned to Tripoli. Again, an aircraft of the NGO Sea-Watch, the [Moonbird](#), observed the presence of two Italian merchant ships that were not allowed to carry out the rescue themselves but were waiting for the so-called Libyan Coast Guard to intervene. Sea-Watch [warned](#) of the imminent **pull-back to Libya**.

One piece of good news is the [suspension of the criminal order against Captain Claus-Peter Reisch](#). In September 2019, Reisch had driven the "Eleonore", a ship of the organisation Mission Lifeline. He brought 100 rescued people to Pozzallo (Sicily) although Salvini had closed the ports to sea rescue organizations. The court in Ragusa arrested the ship and fined Reisch with 300,000 euros.

Situation of the refugees

Italian [Senator Gregorio De Falco](#) was **denied access to the Lampedusa hotspot** by the police in charge. Everything indicates that the health conditions inside the completely overcrowded facility are so bad that the inspection of the senator should be prevented at all costs. Originally conceived as an administrative facility, the hotspot in Lampedusa is

more reminiscent of a closed detention centre guarded by military personnel. Journalists are regularly denied access to the hotspot on the grounds that it is a "military zone," but the facility is under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, not the Ministry of Defense.



Farm Workers in Cassibile, Photo by Silvia di Meo

With the help of an [amnesty](#) ("Sanatoria"), undocumented migrant workers in Italy have been given the opportunity to **regularize their residence status** since last year. Illegality and the associated vulnerability to exploitation are meant to be ended this way. This vulnerability is especially true for migrant workers in the agricultural sector. According to the [pyramid of agricultural exploitation](#), they work under the most precarious working conditions (we reported on the exclusion of illegalized people from the vaccination campaign against Covid-19 [here](#)). However, the initiative seems to have little effect: According to a [report by the Ero Straniero campaign](#), only 14% of applications have been reviewed so far. Only 5% of the applicants received a residence permit. These low numbers are due, among other things, to major bureaucratic hurdles and a shortage of personnel at the processing authorities. Farm work under inhumane conditions also claims victims, again and again. For example, [Camara Fantamadi](#), a farm laborer in the Italian province of Brindisi, died after exhausting

himself **working in the fields under extreme heat**.

Due to increasing violence against migrants and refugees in Libyan detention centers, the organization [Médecins Sans Frontières \(MSF\)](#) suspends its medical and humanitarian aid in Libya. MSF is calling for an **urgent end to the violence** and an improvement of living conditions for people held in these centers.

For more information on the situation in Italy, see our [Streiflicht Italy](#) and our previous Corona Updates on our [homepage](#).

Contact

[borderline-europe](#)
Menschenrechte ohne Grenzen e.V.
<https://www.borderline-europe.de/>
mail@borderline-europe.de
jg@borderline-europe.de