



**Scirocco**  
**borderline-europe, Sicilia – Part 9**  
**Palermo, 30/07/2021**



## Scirocco - Part 9

Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-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

On July 20, the Sicilian Regional Assembly unanimously approved the **Regional Reception and Inclusion Law**. Emergency solutions to admission policies are to be overcome in favor of a [gradual increase in quality standards](#). This means that the migration law, which emerged from a security decree last fall, will finally be applied. [This is good news](#) according to the national network Forum per cambiare l'ordine delle cose (we reported [here](#)).



Italian border with France.

In mid-July, a [Transborder Camp](#) took place in Ventimiglia, a city in northern Italy close to the French border. The place is an important starting point to cross the intra-European border to France. Therefore, the EU is trying to close the border for migrants and refugees. The aim of the camp was to give visibility and solidarity to discriminated people and at the same time, to advocate for the abolition of borders. We reported [here](#) about the intra-European border more detailed (in German).

The two activists [Gian Andrea Franchi and Lorenna Fornasir](#) are now on trial. The Italian prosecutor's office is officially filing charges of "aiding and abetting illegal entry" as well as "illegal residence" with the aggravated circumstances of acting for profit and membership in a criminal organization. **The couple has been advocating for the rights of refugees and migrants in Trieste for years.** In 2019, they founded the volunteer organization "Linea d'Ombra", which raises funds to support those seeking protection by providing food, clothing, and medical care to newly arriving people. We strongly condemn the indictment. We reported [here](#) on the investigation and the campaign in support of the two activists (in German).

As the political and social situation in countries of departure, especially in Libya and Tunisia, has an enormous impact on refugees and migrants, we also report on it here: On July 25, the Tunisian president fired his prime minister and **froze all activities of the parliament**. Previously, there had been demonstrations throughout the country to denounce the deteriorating health, social, and economic situation in [Tunisia](#). The protesters faced an extremely repressive police force.

The human rights organization [Amnesty International](#) has published a **report on human rights violations** in Libyan detention centers and the serious consequences of cooperation between Libya and the EU. Despite the [disclosure](#) of killings, torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence as well as arbitrary, indefinite detention and forced labor, the EU continues to cooperate with Libya. In the first six months of 2021 alone, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and repatriated around 15,000 people at sea – [a higher number than in the whole of 2020](#). Therefore, Amnesty International published an [appeal](#) to

call on the European and Libyan governments to immediately close the detention centers and release arbitrarily detained refugees and migrants. Human rights violations must be investigated without exception and the cooperation between Libya and the EU in the fields of migration and border control must be suspended. However, in the light of [Italy's renewed approval](#) of a foreign military mission in Libya and the continuation of financial support to Libyan authorities, the scope of this appeal seems very limited (we reported [here](#)).

### About Rescue at Sea

On July 8, a search robot of the Italian Coast Guard found another nine bodies from the [shipwreck off Lampedusa](#) on June 30. Unfortunately, **the bodies haven't be recovered yet** despite the promise of the government to provide enough financial means to recover the bodies from the wreckage at a depth of 90 meters. It is still unclear when the permission for the [salvage operation](#) will finally be granted and the money will be available for the respective authorities. In response to this shipwreck, the [Jesuit Refugee Service \(JRS\)](#) has called on Italy and the European Union to **establish their own search and rescue mission in the Mediterranean Sea** and to immediately quit the cooperation with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.

After several days [without rescue ships](#) in the Central Mediterranean Sea, **the Ocean Viking and the Sea-Watch 3 are finally back on mission**. The monitoring vessel Astral, run by the Catalan organization Open Arms, set off for the Central Med as well. In addition, the [Geo Barents](#) has left the port of Augusta after 24 days of determination and will hopefully be able to support the other rescue ships again soon.

**The Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée) has received support on board:** the largest humanitarian network in the world, the Red Cross or rather the "[International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#)" will accompany and support the following operations of the NGO in the Mediterranean Sea. The international federation will provide first aid, psychological care, and other medical supplies. **The Red Cross as a defender of international humanitarian law**, will (hopefully) be a greater obstacle for Italy and Malta to prevent rescue operations or landings: "A boycott of the International Red Cross would eventually bring Rome and Valletta before international justice."



Dangerous zone: the Mediterranean as the world's deadliest escape route.

[Sea Watch's work](#) with rescue ships and monitoring aircrafts is very important to document possible human rights violations. Most recently, the NGO recorded how the **so-called Libyan Coast Guard attempted to threaten the Sea-Watch 3** because it allegedly did not have the right to be in Libyan waters. They threatened to use "[all available](#)

means" to force the Sea-Watch 3 to leave the Libyan SAR (search and rescue) zone whilst the responsibility of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard is limited to save lives in the Libyan SAR zone. Sea Watch emphasized that this behavior should lead to a diplomatic crisis. However, European interest in violations of the international law of the sea seems to be very little as no diplomatic crisis occurred so far. Nevertheless, German authorities have been informed.

On July 13, the monitoring aircraft [Moonbird](#) (Sea-Watch) was able to locate a **boat in distress** with the help of the Alarm Phone. The boat with about 85 refugees onboard was in the Maltese SAR zone at that time. Despite several alarm calls, the [Maltese authorities](#) only responded to the boat in distress after more than 12 hours. The consequences of ignorance are three deaths. 81 people could be rescued.

### **Situation of the refugees**

The [situation within the Pozzallo hotspot](#) has returned to normal after a fire on July 18. In **protest against the unbearable conditions within the hotspots**, some mattresses were set on fire which resulted in a pavilion to burn down. Fortunately, no one was injured. However, [some people were able to escape the hotspot due to the temporary chaos](#), but were subsequently brought back. The protest points once again to the unbearable conditions within the hotspots and shows that [resettlements](#) alone will not improve the situation of refugees and migrants.

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

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