



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 03/2023
Palermo, 15.02.2023



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Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-Scirocco] is a southeasterly, hot strong wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean Sea to Sicily and Italy's north for often only a few hours. This newsflash has been published on an approximately bi-weekly basis since March 2021.

Political and social situation

Anniversary of the CommemorAction

To [commemorate the victims of the European border regime](#), many jointly coordinated and decentralized commemorations took place this year in many cities in Europe and in North and West Africa: the so-called [CommemorActions](#). The occasion is the **6th of February, 2014**, when the Spanish Guardia Civil used rubber bullets and tear gas against migrants and refugees who tried to swim from the Moroccan Tarajal to the Spanish exclave of Ceuta. In doing so, **the Spanish police killed 15 people**.



CommemorAction in Palermo, Photo: Alarm Phone Palermo

The commemorations do not represent a simple remembrance, but a struggle for "truth, justice and reparations for those who died and disappeared at the borders and their families," it is also said in

Palermo, Messina and Lampedusa. Jalila, who lost her two sons in a shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea on November 30, 2019, reported in the print edition of the Italian newspaper "La Repubblica" of February 7, 2023 about the lengthy search for the bodies of her sons and the possible burial two years after the accident. With the help of the project [Mem.Med](#) (MemoriaMediterranea - Memory of the Mediterranean) of Borderline Sicilia in cooperation with Cledu Palermo, Carovane Migranti, LasciateCIEntrare, Rete Antirazzista Catanese and Alarm Phone, people who disappeared at sea are searched for and identified in order to give the too often nameless graves an identity and a story and to support loved ones like Jalila who are left behind during the grieving process. In 2023, borderline-europe is also supporting this project; reports and information will be available [here](#) over the course of the year.

In [Ventimiglia](#) as well, on CommemorAction Day, victims and activists demanded justice and compensation for the families of the victims, the restoration of freedom of movement between Italy and France, and an immediate stop to illegal deportations to Italy, arbitrary detentions, police harassment and violence against migrants and refugees. In memory of the **42 people who died trying to cross the border between Ventimiglia (Italy) and France**, a [memorial](#) was erected in the city center on the same day.

Italian politics

The Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni signed [two more agreements with Libya](#) at the end of January: they involve on the

one hand, the increase of gas supplies from Libya and on the other hand, the **further strengthening of cooperation between Italy and Libya** in controlling and preventing migration movements to Europe (see the [last two issues](#) of this newsletter). Thus, the dramatic human rights crimes continue to be tolerated (more info can be found [here](#), for example).

European politics

In a [letter to the Italian Interior Minister, Matteo Piantedosi](#), Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, called on Italy to revoke the bilateral agreement with Libya as well as the new legislative decrees that are hindering the work of civilian sea rescue organizations (we reported in our publications [here](#) and [here](#) in more detail). The Italian government then insisted again on the alleged legality of the decrees and remained silent about the cooperation agreements with Libya and the illegal and violent deportations of people on [private ships from Italy to Greece](#). [German members of the Bundestag](#) have now also opposed the decree with an open letter to Giorgia Meloni. They call on the Italian government not to let the decree become law on February 15. However, the [Chamber of Deputies voted to implement it with 187 votes in favor](#) and 139 against. If the Senate will also vote in favor, the decree will be turned into law by March 3. At a European Council meeting on February 9 and 10, the EU states, which are still divided on [migration issues](#) and have [not been able to negotiate a functioning asylum pact since 2015](#), once again negotiated the **adaptation of**

foreign policy instruments to speed up return procedures. Discussions in this regard included, among other things, diplomatic measures, visa policies, the distribution of [development cooperation funds](#), and the abolition of trade cooperation with third countries if repatriations are impeded. These **anti-migration measures** were cynically summarized by the Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni under the neo-colonial title "[Pact for Africa](#)," although it is a pact against African migrants, among others. They largely coincide with the Italian proposal to speed up deportations of undocumented migrants (we reported [here](#)).



Photo: Jakob Cotton, unplash

The [head of Oxfam's EU office](#) commented on the EU's plans as an "obsessive focus (...) on outsourcing (of) migration responsibility".

A document from the conservative EPP group also calls for more border fences and walls as well as agreements with the so-called third countries, in line with the dangerous and inhumane Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Libya. The [German government](#) distanced itself from such proposals. Nevertheless, despite years of pressure from the Italian government, there will be [no change to the Dublin Agreement](#).

Situation of Refugees

[Recent data from the Altræconomia magazine](#) reveal the extent of the inadequacies of the Italian reception system for asylum seekers and refugees. There is a complete lack of communication between those responsible, there is poor or no planning for reception in Italy and the government is incapable of acting in the face of the emergency. **While the Reception and Integration System (Sai) has more than 1,600 free places, the Extraordinary Reception Centers (Cas) are completely overwhelmed.** There is a lack of transparency and central administration in both the Cas and Sai systems, but the Italian Interior Ministry does not plan to restructure the reception capacities. This is at the expense of those who are driven into homelessness because they are not provided with a roof over their heads. We also reported on the dramatic conditions of reception, and the start of several court cases dealing with the failure to provide accommodation and inadmissible asylum cases against local prefectures and police headquarters in [previous issues of the Scirocco](#).

New entry quotas for migrant workers

In a new DPCM (a ministerial decree issued directly by the President of the Council of Ministers), the [quotas of entry](#) for foreign workers into Italian territory were increased from 69,700 in 2022 to 82,705 now. For land work, 44,000 permits were issued (compared to the 42,000 of the previous year). This new decree is adapted to the **increased need for migrant seasonal workers**, who, according to the [Idos dossier](#), harvest every fourth agricultural product and who

provide **more than 29% of the total working days** of the agricultural sector. In many districts, migrant workers are now an integral part of the economic and social fabric, as claimed by the dossier. A priority check on whether non-EU nationals could do the work remains problematic. The agricultural regulations allow the seasonal entry of people who then leave. However, it does not change the exploitation of migrants already living in Italy, who have to struggle year after year in the fields and elsewhere, with and without papers, without being legalized.



"Erbe bianche", a seasonal worker camp in Sicily, Photo: Borderline Sicilia

Report: "Beaten, Punished and Rejected"

According to the [fifth annual report](#) "Beaten, Punished and Rejected" by the Protecting Rights at Borders (PRAB) network, **more than 5,750 people were rejected at the European borders** in 2022. As a consequence, they were denied access to international protection. To do so, EU states use **violent and illegal methods of deportation**, which are increasingly integrated into their own border control mechanisms. Refugees and migrants from Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan were particularly affected by deportations, physical abuse, destruction of property and precarious survival conditions; around 12% of those

deported were children. The situation in Italy is particularly dramatic on the border with France and at the Adriatic ports to Greece, where there are constant rejections and readmissions to Albania and [Slovenia](#), which the Italian government, however, denies, says Erminia Rizzi of Asgi (more on this in the current [Central Med Info](#)). PRAB also points out that the EU treats those seeking protection with double standards depending on their country of origin, which violates international human rights law (see our [Spotlight on Italy: "Non-places"](#)).

On our own account: New monitoring project in Sicily

Together with Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo, [borderline-europe](#) has started a "[monitoring project](#)" supported by the Evangelical Church in Rhineland: **"Invisible: the unworthy treatment of refugees in Sicily"**. In the future, we will report on the living situation of refugees and migrants in Sicily in posts and articles on our homepage. Our first article on the work of Arci Porco Rosso can be found [here](#).

Find more information on the situation in Italy and previous issues of the [Scirocco](#) under "Projects" on our [homepage](#).

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