



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 04/2023
Palermo, 28.02.2023



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Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-Schirokko] is a south-easterly, 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

The new decree law of January 2, 2023, which in particular criminalizes civilian sea rescue, (we reported [here](#) and [here](#)), a so-called **code of conduct for NGO ships**, has now also been [confirmed by the Senate](#). In the previous week, the House of Representatives had already approved it. All amendments proposed by the opposition were [rejected](#); even the **appeals of the civil organizations Emergency** and [Amnesty International](#) could not change this. All that remains for the decree to come into force is for it to be signed by Italian president Sergio Mattarella by March 3, then it will become law. The chairman of the Alliance of the Greens and Left in the parliament, [Peppe De Cristofaro](#), aptly explained that immigration is not an emergency but a structural phenomenon that the political right is using as a propaganda tool instead of seeking structural solutions. This law, he said, is a "**shameless, ideological and cynical regulation**" that has a clear objective, namely to make rescue at sea impossible.

European Politics

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani addressed the increasing arrivals of Tunisian migrants in the EU at a [summit of the European Council in Brussels](#) - where primarily EU support for Ukraine was

negotiated - in his usual [anti-migration stance](#). He plans to travel to Tunis in person, along with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, to meet with Tunisian President Kais Saïed. **Tunisia has been in a deep economic and political-institutional crisis for 11 years**, which seems hopeless for many, mainly young people. This seems to be reason enough for the EU to push ahead with the "[joint management of migration flows](#)," as it is called in EU jargon.



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The European Council has called for "strengthening and accelerating immediate operational measures", meaning a reduction in reception capacities, increased deportations, further cooperation with so-called third countries, as well as the expansion of border infrastructure and border surveillance [with European funds](#) - in other words, **the effective blocking and sealing off of migration movements at the borders**. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of the post-fascist Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi) party is visibly satisfied with the outcome of the summit, as [some of her demands](#) are reflected in the EU's final documents, both in terms of content and wording.

Situation of Refugees

At the same time, the situation for refugees in Tunisia is worsening massively. After a meeting of the National Security Council on

February 21, 2023, president Kaïs Saïed announced that the unauthorized entry of refugees must be stopped urgently because they would infiltrate and "Africanize" the country. These statements triggered a wave of hatred and violence against sub-Saharan refugees in the country. "It is a racist approach, just like the campaigns in Europe," said [Romdhane Ben Amor](#), spokesman for the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), according to Reuters. "The presidential campaign aims to create an imaginary enemy for Tunisians to distract them from their fundamental problems," he said. There is a [solidarity appeal for donations](#) to support persecuted migrants.



Tunisia, on the way to the Libyan border

The municipalities of Lampedusa and Linosa will receive a contribution of [two and a half million euros](#) for the year 2024 to deal with the many landings. The NGOs and platforms Louise Michel, Maldusa, Mediterranea Saving Humans, ResQship R_42 Sailtraining and Alarm Phone pointed out in a [press release](#) that 3,000 people in the hotspot of Lampedusa **is not an emergency but a political decision**: "It is a political will not to manage arrivals beyond the logic of the emergency, to constantly respond unprepared to events that are predictable and therefore could be managed with specific tools and precise measures. It is a political will to make Lampedusa the (at the same time forgotten) centre of the supposed

invasion, of the tragedies, of the chaos. All this could be avoided, but it is a political choice not to do so." The groups' political demands can be read [here](#).

Last week, [another young woman died](#) in the **overcrowded hotspot of Lampedusa**. This is the third case in a few months. [Activists](#) denounce the miserable conditions in which people arriving in Lampedusa are forced to live. The Lampedusa hotspot shows that the Italian reception system can **turn the island into a prison**, which sometimes ends fatally.

Accoglienza – Accommodation for refugees

Under the name "[Il vuoto dell'accoglienza](#)" (engl. "The Reception Vacuum"), the multi-year project Centres of Italy by ActionAid and openpolis has published a new report on the Italian reception system 2018 -2021. The report speaks of a system **that could fulfil its mission regularly, but is still managed as an emergency solution**. This can be seen, for example, in the [more than 20,000 vacant places in reception centres at the end of 2021](#), which remain unused due to transfer problems between the Cas (Centri d'accoglienza straordinaria, emergency centers) and the Sai (Sistema di accoglienza e integrazione, secondary shelter). Even those who actually fall under the protection of one of the two systems suffer from a **lack of care** and sleeping facilities, as evidenced, among other things, by a [CasertaNews indictment](#) (we reported on similar cases in previous issues of Scirocco [here](#) and [here](#)). Moreover, the migrant population within these centres currently represents only about [0.13% of the total Italian population](#). These are figures that do not fit with the political propaganda of the "invasion" used by right-wing politicians.



Deportation detention Trapani (Milo)

Catastrophic conditions also prevail in the detention centre for deportees (CPR) of Palazzo San Gervasio in the province of Potenza. In a [question to the Ministers of the Interior, Health and Justice](#), Eleonora Evi, a deputy from Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, described the conditions in the CPR as "**cage-like**," with narrow corridors surrounded by bars and rooms consisting only of beds and concrete tables, with no door to the bathrooms. Pictures have been published in which **migrants are shackled by the wrists**. Furthermore, it must be checked whether **sedatives** such as Rivotril, Tavor and Talofen are actually administered randomly.

In a municipal residence for migrants in Via Provinciale San Vito in Brindisi, the residents had to live **for a week without light and almost a year without hot water**, as the [representative of the African community, Drissa Kone](#), told the Brindisi city council. Also from other regions such situations are reported again and again.

Working conditions for migrants

The [first report on the exploitation of women in domestic and care work](#), in the agriculture as well as migration sector, promoted by Slaves No More Association and ACLI and referring to the year 2022, shows that 70% of domestic and care work in Italy is done by migrants. This is characterized by a high degree of **precariousness, informality and irregularity**, so that migrants are driven into structural exploitation. This is particularly

evident in systematic harassment, extortion and sexual violence, as well as dependence on employers.

The report "Protecting the Rights of Migrant Workers in Irregular Situations and Managing Irregular Labour Migration: A Compendium," [published by the International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), also states that approximately **169 million migrant workers currently live and work outside their country of origin**. This is the majority of international migrants (the figures refer to the year 2020). The compendium also provides information on situations that can drive migrant workers into illegality, their rights, and relevant international standards and best practices. It also highlights the many political and legal instruments that can prevent the exploitation of irregular migrant workers while promoting respect for the human rights of all people, regardless of their status.

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found under "Projects" on our [homepage](#) and in previous issues of [Scirocco](#).

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