



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 09/2023
Palermo, 23.05.2023



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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

France and Italy are still at odds over migration policy issues. After the **diplomatic tensions** of recent months (we reported in [previous issues](#) of Scirocco), the two EU member states are now at odds over a comment made by French Minister [Gérald Darmanin](#), who accused Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of not being able to "solve the problems of uncontrolled migration to Italy." Subsequently, French politician Stéphane Séjourné (Renew Europe) also called Meloni's policies "[unfair, inhumane and ineffective](#)," adding that the French far right is taking the Italian far right (the current governing alliance, ed.) as a model. The exchange of blows led both Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to decide to cancel their long-planned visit to the Elysée Palace. However, in a [communiqué](#) issued later, the French Foreign Ministry reiterated that it wanted to take up the "challenge of migration" together with Italy "in a spirit of solidarity." In concrete terms, this means further undermining the right to asylum in the EU. Together with German Interior Minister [Nancy Faeser](#) (SPD), the French government is planning the **EU**

Commission's new migration and asylum package, which foresees closed transit centers for rejected asylum and protection seekers as well as accelerated asylum procedures of a maximum of three months at the EU's external borders. However, Italy, as a transit country, could reject these reforms. The tense political situation has a particularly negative impact on the situation at the French-Italian border and is carried out on the backs of those migrants and refugees who are in this border region: France wants to [militarize the border](#) with Italy even more in the future and rejects the distribution of people arriving in Italy within the EU. In addition, France is preparing to [send 150 additional border police officers](#). In recent years, **humanitarian emergencies, fatal accidents and racist police violence have repeatedly occurred on the border between Italy and France** - on both sides of the border; this should not be forgotten.

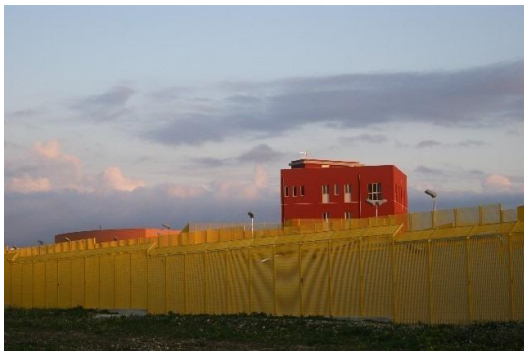


Boats in Lampedusa, Image: Mediterranean Hope

Stato d'Emergenza - State of Emergency

On April 11, the Italian government declared a "state of emergency (...) to cope with the extraordinary increase in the flow of migrants" (we reported [here](#)). **However, little has changed on Lampedusa since then:** Due to the high landings, many people were brought from the dock to the hotspot only after many hours, often without getting

drinking water, reports [Giovanni D'Ambrosio](#), [Mediterranean Hope](#) staff. Arriving people are not treated like survivors, but like criminals during a police operation, he adds. The president of the Italian Solidarity Consortium (ICS) in Trieste, [Gianfranco Schiavone](#), shares this observation. Italy, he said, is gradually moving toward the **Hungarian model**: "The current government wants a gradual opening of closed centers for the detention and segregation of asylum seekers in hotspots and return centers. It is moving toward comprehensive detention of all asylum seekers."



Detention Center (CPR) Trapani-Milo, Image: Franziska Schmidt

Meanwhile, the regional deputy of Emilia-Romagna, [Valentina Castaldini](#) (Forza Italia), questioned the election of the region's governor, Stefano Bonaccini (Partito Democratico), calling on him to accept the state of emergency imposed by the government. This stems from the fact that [four Italian regions](#) - Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Campania and Puglia - **have not yet agreed** to the state of emergency imposed by the government and applied nationally.

"Immigration Plan" by Piantedosi

During a visit to the meeting of the Committee of Public Order and Security in Palermo, Italian Interior Minister [Matteo Piantedosi](#) announced a **new**

strategy to deal with the emergency and relieve the pressure on the Lampedusa hotspot, which has long been completely overloaded by the increased number of landings. Part of this would be a new "immigration plan," a [task force](#) for Lampedusa, better transfers between the island and the mainland, and an [increase of 850 reception places](#) in first arrival centers between Sicily and Calabria. This could be one reason for the resumption of **Dublin transfers** back to Italy, which are currently paused at the request of the Italian Dublin Unit due to lack of capacity. According to Piantedosi, on the one hand, the reception of migrants and refugees should be [diffuse](#) and not in central hotspots or large centers, but the [expansion of the CPR](#) (Centri di permanenza per i rimpatri; deportation centers) is also planned. On the other hand, Piantedosi proposed the [creation of a round table](#) so that the state and regions could better coordinate. Likewise, he pointed to an upcoming visit to Tunis that the Italian government will use to negotiate further **bilateral agreements between Italy and Tunisia**. This "strategic dialogue" with the Tunisian authorities will take place with the participation of the European Commission and aims to externalize the EU border to the African continent.

Bilateral talks with Libya and Great Britain

The bilateral conversation between Giorgia Meloni and the commander of the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) Khalifa Haftar focused on the large number of landings in Italy. [Palazzo Chigi](#), seat of the Prime Minister, stated that Meloni also confirmed Italian support for further UN action in Libya to revive a political process regarding presidential

and parliamentary elections in Libya. [Khalifa Haftar](#), an opponent of the UN-recognized Libyan government, also met with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani in Rome. In a meeting with the Egyptian leader in Cairo, Tajani had earlier called for action against Haftar "to enable a final pacification of Libya" and to **reduce the flow of refugees from Libya**. As long as refugees and migrants are subjected to violence, torture, and death in Libyan camps, this plan is dramatic. The sudden negotiation with the Tripoli government's opponent has led to confusion among other governments as well. The Italian government is also currently holding talks with the [United Kingdom](#) on greater cooperation in migration and asylum policy.

Political voices from Lampedusa

The mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa, [Filippo Mannino](#), stressed - regarding the new plans of Interior Minister Piantedosi - his **numerous calls for support**. He said that the existing budget is not enough, neither for the care of the arriving people nor for the general infrastructure of the islands. The former mayor [Totò Martello](#) commented critically on this, such as the statement that according to Mannino migrants and refugees should be "led past" Lampedusa. Moreover, Martello pointed out that the issues mentioned by Mannino, such as sea rescue, the management of the reception center, medical care or ship logistics, would be the responsibility of other authorities and the municipality would only intervene in marginal issues. Thus, there must be other reasons for the mayor's lack of action, Martello concludes.

Situation of the refugees

In early May, [500 unaccompanied refugee minors](#) - staying at the Contrada Imbriacola hotspot on Lampedusa - protested for a transfer to other centers on the mainland.



Hotspot Lampedusa

They shouted "Liberté" - freedom - from the roofs of the pavilions where they are housed. The Prefecture of Agrigento had not yet managed to organize places for the transfer of the minors. **The loud protests had an effect:** a short time later, the first [transfers to Porto Empedocle](#) began. With the Salvini decrees adopted in 2018, the number of places for minors in the Italian reception system has been drastically reduced, thus there has been a **structural shortage of safe accommodation for minors** for a long time. This creates the paradoxical situation that especially those people who should be the first to be transferred out of the hotspot in order to safeguard the best interests of the children stay the longest. Hotspots are not safe, as Save the Children cautions in the report "[Hidden in plain sight - Southern Frontier](#)," published in February 2023.

Computerized application for international protection hardly works at all

Since April 5, Milan provides the option of **applying for international protection with the help of a computerized system** - but the system is blocking applications and so "the queues are no longer in front of the Questura, but have moved to the Internet," according to a [joint statement](#) from Todo Cambia, Associazione studi giuridici sull'immigrazione (Asgi), Naga, Cambio passo, Mutuo soccorso Milano and Rete Milano. The new system provides for **three different application procedures**: People with identification documents can directly select an appointment for the application after registration; people without identification documents have to rely on the support of civil and church organizations; and people over-60 years old and pregnant women can apply by phone call or in person for an ad hoc procedure. Applicants in the first group are thus forced to keep trying on the portal until they happen to catch a moment when the system allows them to book.

Reception in Tuscany

As arrival numbers in Tuscany remain very high and the 22 reception centers are now at **full capacity**, the prefecture now called for the [opening of private and non-private places](#) such as parks, gardens and lawns to house the arriving people. The CAS in Bivigliano opened a few days ago with 50 reception places and is already fully occupied, according to the operating cooperative Girasole. Now this no longer precludes the re-installation of makeshift tents, which are actually **unsustainable from a humanitarian point of view**. Due to the state of emergency, it must be expected that dubious operators of old hotels and

precarious, quickly built tent cities will appear, as we have also experienced in the "State of Emergency North Africa" from 2011 to 2013.



Image: Julie Ricard, Unplash

Monitoring - Fight - Resistance against detention pending deportation

In a new article of the [Arci Porco Rosso](#), which every month gives us an insight into current issues of the Sans Papiers Counseling Center, the **detention pending deportation in Italy is addressed**. The government has decided to increase the number of places in CPR (Centri di Permanenza di Repatriazione) detention centers. But cases of inhumane treatment are accumulating in a detention center, where the detainees are not criminals, but refugees and migrants whose only "crime" is their unauthorized entry into Italy.

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

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