

borderline-europe, Sicily

SCIROCCO

News from Italy



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

„Cutro is not a decree, Cutro is a massacre“

Since three months relatives of the victims and civil society have been waiting for clarification of the causes and responsibilities of the dramatic shipwreck near Steccato di Cutro in the province of Crotone (Calabria). **At least 94 dead** were recovered after the accident on February 26 this year (see [here](#) and in [this issue](#) of this newsletter). With the passing of the decree and the following law, which was also insensitively called the 'Cutro Decree', the government instrumentalised the accident and the fate of the victims to implement an even more security-oriented policy regarding access to migrants' rights, explains [Melting Pot Europe](#). Since then, civil society organisations have been working to establish contacts and relationships with family members and survivors, trying to support them remotely in their applications and complaints against the non-rescue. 76 survivors have applied for international protection from the EU amongst Italy and Germany. Most of the bodies have since been repatriated to their countries of origin or buried by relatives in Europe. As not all bodies could be identified, unknown deceased were buried in cemeteries near the disaster site in Cutro and Crotone. As [Melting Pot Europe](#) reports, washed-up finds from the accident, such as personal belongings, backpacks and clothing, were never recovered from shores, they were **"macabre symbols of the victim's abandonment at the border"**.

Frontex Executive Director [Hans Leijten](#)s confirmed at a hearing in front of the Parliament's Justice Committee that Frontex had passed on all the necessary information to the Italian authorities. This included "the location, infrared images, speed and course" of the vessel. Due to bad weather conditions and lack of fuel, the European Border Agency later returned to the scene of the accident by plane. It is

important to note that the accident could have been avoided at this point by immediately sending an appropriate vessel to carry out rescue operations at sea. However, despite Frontex's notification, this did not happen.

Frontex is taking on an **increasingly strong role in deportations from the EU** and, according to the [Statewatch initiative](#), is trying among other things to organize the "initiative, destination and date" of deportations, tasks that were previously reserved for national authorities.



*Cemetery of Serre in Cutro, burial of seven unidentified bodies.
Photo: Martina Gentile*

UN High Commissioner for Refugees criticises Italian Piantedosi law

The [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) expressed with "deep concern" that the decree has been adopted in the follow-up of the Cutro shipwreck, which was transformed into Law No. 50 by the Chambers on the 5th of May, referring to its partial **incompatibility with international refugee and human rights**. This includes for example the feasibility of the planned measures, the possible impact on the asylum system and the space of protection guaranteed to asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons.

In this context [Rachele Scarpa](#), a member of the Democratic Party (PD) from Treviso, has submitted a request to the Italian Ministry of the Interior on how

the reception will be regulated under the law and whether the construction of new tent cities is intended.

The [Pope](#) has publicly expressed **solidarity** with the refugees in Italy and especially in Libya. He warned that incidents like the Cutro shipwreck must not happen again.



Crotona cemetery, body KR3. Photo: Ottavia Segalla

Stato di Emergenza – State of Emergency

After declaring a state of emergency, the Italian government is now planning to **build a new hotspot** for refugees in the Friuli-Veneto-Giulia region in the north of the country. The so-called Balkan route is ending there.

Reception **capacities are also to be significantly increased** in the hotspots in the regions of [Calabria](#) and [Sicily](#). [Valerio Valenti](#), the new commissioner for the administration of the reception of migrants, mentions at least 1,000 additional places. Aid from the Civil Defence has been promised. This is based on a [decree](#) signed by the head of the Civil Protection Department, Fabrizio Curcio, and published in the official gazette.

In the meantime, the situation in the overcrowded Lampedusa hotspot has eased a bit. In mid-May only [69 people](#) were still accommodated in the Contrada Imbriacola hotspot. However, this situation can change daily.

Rejection of asylum application based on minor drug crimes is unconstitutional

The [Italian Constitutional Court](#) has recently declared that the rejection of a residence permit based on minor drug offences is unconstitutional. This is a welcomed decision for the protection of asylum seekers.

Court case on the sinking of the „Heaven“

On the 30th of August 2020 **the ship "Heaven" sank off** Praialonga (Isola Capo Rizzuto, Calabria), it cost the lives of Omar Ali Osman, Abdirahman Nur Abdullahi and two other people. The four migrants jumped into the water and drowned when the engine room of the boat caught fire. The four customs police defendants were accused of [negligent manslaughter](#) for not immediately disembarking the refugees from the ship and bringing them to safety. The public prosecutor's office in Crotona has now demanded that a trial should open against the four defendants.

Bilateral relationship between Italy and France

After a meeting between Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and French President Emmanuel Macron at the [G7 summit](#), Italy and France now want to restart talks with each other despite some diplomatic crises (we reported among others [here](#)). They also agreed on a meeting of the two [foreign ministers](#) regarding future cooperations. [Macron](#) spoke in favor of **cooperation between the two countries**, as Italy should be supported in dealing with refugees and migrants.

Strengthening cooperation between Italy and Tunisia

In a conversation between Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi and his Tunisian colleague Kamel Feki, it was decided to promote the so-called [voluntary repatriation](#) from Italy to Tunisia. This is part of a [comprehensive strategy of cooperation](#)

between the two states which goal it is to make the **Italian maritime border more secure and blocking the movement of migration across the Mediterranean**. In addition, at the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Italy requested the release of a **€1.9 billion loan** from the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) to avoid repercussions on the EU in the form of further migratory movements from the socio-political unrest in Tunisia, which has been growing since the beginning of the last economic crisis. However, the IMF demands [precise guarantees](#) for the disbursement of the loan, including economic and democratic reforms, among others.

Situation of the refugees

Exactly two years ago **Moussa Balde** died in a CPR (detention center) in Turin. To commemorate his death, a demonstration was organized in [Ventimiglia](#) where around 100 people attended. Moussa Balde was 22 years old when he was found hanging in an isolation room on the night of May 22-23, 2021. He had been taken to this facility for deportation after being brutally beaten by three men in Ventimiglia. On the second anniversary of his death, [his brother](#) pointed out that Moussa was the hope of the family. He left his family and risked his life to cross the Mediterranean Sea and save his family from poverty. His family is certain that Moussa Balde did not commit suicide but **was killed in the CPR of Turin**. Since then, the situation for migrants and refugees in Ventimiglia got worse: since the French government closed the border eight years ago, which has claimed at least 42 lives and destroyed the lives of thousands more, the violence from the police and the state which people are exposed to in transit has increased, reported [ImperiaPost](#).



Manifestation in Ventimiglia, Photo: Jacopo Gugliotta

The reception practice of Ukrainians has an inhibiting effect on the reception of other refugees and migrants

According to the lawyers' network [ASGI](#), a comparison between the reception of refugees from Ukraine and the reception of refugees and migrants from West Asia and (Northern) Africa who arrive via the Mediterranean indicates that the accelerated reception system for Ukrainians leads to a **much slower system of asylum processing for other people seeking protection**. Since 2019 Italy has declared other 13 countries in the Balkans and in Africa as 'safe', therefore those seeking protection can be more easily and legally deported from these countries. Some nationalities, for example Tunisians, **can only apply for asylum in Italy under very difficult circumstances**. According to a report by the European Refugee Council (ECRE) only 918 people out of 12,883 Tunisians who arrived in Italy across the Mediterranean Sea in 2020 were registered as asylum seekers. In contrast, Italy has already granted immediate access to support services to more than 50,000 Ukrainians under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive (about the activation of the so-called "mass influx directive", see [here](#)). [Sara Consolato](#) of Refugees Welcome Italy aptly described this route as the "sleeping beauty of European asylum legislation" due to its immediate entry into the system of public services.

Upper income limit for refugees in the state reception centers

After the declaration of the new state of emergency in the Italian reception system last month (see [here](#) and [here](#)), the Italian government under Giorgia Meloni decided that refugees must now move out of the SAI (secondary shelters) and CAS (emergency centers) if they have **more than €500** a month at their disposal. Data from Istat shows that this is a **discriminatory practice that forces those affected into precarity**: The relative poverty line, the number of those people who live in poverty despite income, is € 640 per month in Italy. Furthermore, the affected people only have between five days (as in the case of the Mattei Center in Bologna) and twenty-four hours (as recently in Turin) to move out of the reception centers and look for alternative accommodation. This is catastrophic given the lack of housing and will lead to a large proportion of the current residents of the centers **literally finding themselves on the streets**.

Inappropriate treatment of those seeking protection at the CPR in Turin

The [Turin Prosecutor's Office](#) is currently investigating around forty cases of inappropriate treatment of foreigners detained in the City of Turin's CPR. Investigators are particularly focused on individuals in solitary confinement in the so-called 'hospital ward', as some of them may have been held there unnecessarily. The investigations relate to incidents that occurred in 2020 and 2021.

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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The Scirocco will be published in 2023 with the kind support of the Evangelical Church of Rhineland (EKIR) and the "Förderverein Pro Asyl".

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Cover photo: Wolfgang Hasselmann, unplash