

borderline-europe, Sicily

SCIROCCO

News from Italy



Scirocco [ʃiˈrɒkko-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 news flash has been published on an approximately bi-weekly basis since March 2021.

Political and social situation

EU Migration Policy

Ylva Johansson, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, attended a [press conference](#) right after she visited the Lampedusa hotspot with the Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi and Prefect Valerio Valenti. She said that no EU member state would be left alone on the migration issue. Therefore, Johansson announced financial support for Italy and stressed the [solidarity of responsibility](#) among EU countries. The latest agreement reached by the EU interior ministers at the beginning of June earmarks a **solidarity pledge** according to which EU member countries that are not willing to take in refugees and migrants via resettlement, have to pay 20,000€ per person who is resettled elsewhere. Johansson also highlighted the importance of cooperation with so-called "[countries of origin and transit](#)" (third countries) crossed by the movements of migration. Due to its geographical location, Piantedosi pointed out that Lampedusa will always be a place of [first response](#) and entry to the EU. The island will be strongly supported by mainland Italy, however. Work is therefore underway to facilitate an orderly management that considers both the humanitarian aspect and the island's security.

[Poland and Hungary](#) have criticized the majority voting method proposed by the 27 EU ministers in early June and continue to insist on **unanimity** in voting on European migration policy issues. This slows down the implementation of the [EU's new migration agreements](#) (see our publication "[Deconstruct Solidarity in the EU](#)").

On the sidelines of the EU summit in Brussels, Giorgia Meloni, and other EU leaders emphasized that cooperation with Tunisia should serve as a "model" for relations with other so-called "countries of origin and transit" (third countries). [Ursula von der Leyen](#), head of the EU Commission, announced an additional **12 million euros** for cooperation with third countries.

She also hopes for [new mediation efforts](#) between EU member states to reach an agreement on the issues of European migration policy by the end of the current legislative period. In the past, these efforts have rarely improved the political and humanitarian situation of refugees and migrants. Instead, they have further **hardened the migration and border regime**.



Tunisian-Libyan border Ras Ajdir

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights [Dunja Mijatovic](#) deplored the increasing cooperation of the European Union with Libya and Tunisia to block the movement of migrants towards Europe. **The EU does not consider the human rights situation in these countries.** An example of this is the new agreement between the EU and Tunisia, which aims at blocking migration toward Italy. The agreement provides for an initial funding of 150 million euros, with the prospect of another 900 million euros in exchange for extensive cooperation with Libya, especially in the economic sector and border management. Negotiations on this have not yet been concluded but cast a deceptive image of Tunisia, which is increasingly **racist and violent** towards migrants. [Images](#) from inside the Sfax train station, where black migrants were preparing to leave for the capital Tunis, show the physical violence and inhumane eviction of migrant residents from their homes and public spaces. As several non-governmental organizations denounced, adults and children from sub-Saharan Africa are being deprived of food and water in the [Tunisian desert](#) and **forced to leave**. Tunisian president [Kais Saied](#), who significantly promotes the anti-migration and racist

sentiment in Tunisia, emphasizes again and again that he does not tolerate Tunisia being made available as a transit zone for people from African countries, just as Tunisia is not responsible for border protection of Europe (see also the [last issue](#) of the Scirocco).



On the road to Libya

Italian politics

Four migrants who [had returned to Italy](#) after being deported were now arrested in Lampedusa. Since their deportation, they are banned from re-entering Italy and the EU. [Harry](#), on the other hand, a Sudanese asylum seeker who was deported from Italy in 2018, has won a **lengthy case against the Italian authorities**. He is expected to be able to return to Italy once the Italian embassy presents his new travel documents from Libya. The support project JLProject is calling on the Italian government to finally release these documents without further delay.

The new report, "[The Crotone Cover Up](#)" by the investigative research network [Lighthouse Reports](#) chronicles the **willful failure** of the Italian financial police, the coast guard, and Frontex in the dramatic shipping accident at Cutro on February 26 of this year that left 94 people dead, including 35 children (see [here](#) and [previous issues](#) of Scirocco). The report shows how the **Italian authorities lied** about their involvement in the Cutro disaster and how Frontex has supported the false version of events. The lawyers of the affected families want to present the case to the European Court of Human Rights, where they will hold Italy responsible for the shipwreck and the many fatalities.

Italian President Giorgia Meloni visited **Austrian Chancellor** Karl Nehammer during the [Wachau Forum](#) and emphasized the common positions of the two neighboring countries in the field of European migration policy in the EU Council. Also, she referred to great similarities with Poland. The two governments are pursuing an [anti-migration policy](#) with a focus on curbing so-called irregular immigration and cooperation with African countries in the externalization of the European border regime and support services on the ground, which discourage the movements of migration from continuing their journey to the European Union.

The Italian politician and leader of the Partito Democratico (PD), [Elly Schlein](#), **criticized Meloni** for her trip to Warsaw. Among other things, she called for reviving "ius soli" and abolishing the Bossi-Fini law to create legal access to Italy – not only for war refugees from Ukraine but also for those who come to Europe in search of a better life. At the European level, Schlein called for a reform of the Dublin Regulation, as well as a state-run European search and rescue mission, a stop to the criminalization of NGOs, and the creation of safe and legal access routes with humanitarian visas in the embassies of transit countries.

During the first six months of this year, the number of **deportations** from Italy increased by [32 percent](#) compared to the same period last year. Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi aims at making the deportation system even more "effective" and at introducing accelerated procedures (which are not based on the individual grounds for the protection of asylum seekers and refugees) immediately after landing on the Italian coasts.

News from Lampedusa

Despite the new operator of the hotspot Contrada Imbricola, the Italian Red Cross (Croce Rossa), and the daily ship transfers between Lampedusa and the Sicilian mainland, the Lampedusa hotspot due to the numerous landings – especially from Sfax (Tunisia) – once again **exceeded its capacity limit** with [over 3,200 guests](#) at the end of June. Rescued people reported that they had been shipwrecked in

international waters and that some people on board were still missing. During a transfer from Lampedusa to the Sicilian mainland in late June, one of the ships with more than 500 people was forced to remain in the **burning sun** for **eight hours straight** before continuing to Augusta and Catania. A stressful and retraumatizing situation for the people on board, whose dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea was just behind them. The **European Court of Justice** has now condemned Italy for the **inhumane treatment of migrants and refugees** in the hotspot of Lampedusa. The verdict is final, as the Italian government will not appeal it.

The situation of the refugees

A new report by **Coalizione italiana Libertà diritti civili** investigates the business of detaining migrants in Italian detention centers for deportation (CPR): A business whose turnover was in the range of 56 million euros between 2019 and 2023 and in which multinational companies are involved. The report examines the tenders of the centers for detention pending deportation (CPR) and asks which actors are involved in the operation. Moreover, it emphasized the **numerous scandals** of these centers that have become public are involved.

At the beginning of July, riots broke out among the 50 migrant detainees at the **Pian del Lago deportation center** in Caltanissetta.

On June 19, a group of migrants in Calabria was attacked with beatings and metal bars. **Two of them were injured**, one of them seriously. Now a **23-year-old Italian** has been arrested as a potential perpetrator.

Lately, another **person died while trying to cross the French-Italian border**. The man drowned in the Roja River near Ventimiglia about one year after a 36-year-old Somali man died there under the same circumstances. With the slogans "Life on the streets hurts" and "**Indifference kills**", about 30 Italian and French **activists of the no-border movement**

remembered all those who lost their lives trying to cross the French-Italian border.



Foto: No borders Ventimiglia

Gianfranco Schiavone, president of the Italian Solidarity Consortium (ICS), criticized the Trieste authorities for presenting continuous arrivals through the Balkan route as a "crisis." Data would show that the number of those staying in Trieste had not changed despite the increase in arrivals. The supposed "crisis" is nothing more than a **lack of reception** promoted by the local administration, which has put hundreds of people on the streets and caused great uncertainty, he said.

About **80 asylum seekers** protested in front of the prefecture in Trieste for **better reception conditions**. Due to poor reception structures, around 300 people are still forced to live on the streets there.

The three Palestinians **Fares, Walid, and Ayman** are currently in prison in Catania (Sicily) on the suspect of being smugglers. They are in very bad physical condition and yet want to **hunger and thirst strike** to make their voices heard – and despite the knowledge that two other inmates of the Augusta prison have recently died after a long, unheard protest. The news of the hunger and thirst strike by Fares, Walid, and Ayman has gone public thanks to advocates and associations. They have now informed the guarantor of the rights of the prisoners about the protest of the three Palestinians.

The national trade union confederation **Cgil of Siena** reports on the great economic obstacles for migrants about the "Flussi Decree". This decree establishes the entry quotas from so-called third countries for labor purposes. According to this decree, a certificate of registration of the residence permit should be sufficient to open a bank account in Italy – in reality,

however, banks would often require the residence permit itself, which takes a very long time to issue (on the subject of [bank accounts](#), see also here). The Cgil appeals to both local and national authorities to remove these obstacles. Read more about the **bureaucratic blockade** migrants face in Italy which massively hinders their everyday life and arrival in Italy on the website of Arci Porco Rosso [here](#).

According to [Icar](#) (Italian Conference on AIDS and Antiviral Research) in Bari, the migrant population in Italy is significantly more affected by AIDS and syphilis than the Italian average. At the same time, two out of three migrants in Italy become infected due to the **difficult living conditions** caused by poverty and exploitation. These are alarming findings, as many of these infections could be prevented within the framework of a humane admission policy.

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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