

borderline-europe, Sicily

SCIROCCO

News from Italy



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

Political and social situation

In the future, EU member states will be obliged to hand out the "**Common Information Leaflet on Asylum Procedures**" to asylum seekers. This follows from a judgement of the [European Court of Justice \(ECJ\)](#). The ECJ further emphasized **the need for individual interviews** when first applying for asylum as well as for any further applications in other EU member states. This issue is relevant, as non-compliance with these obligations could "under certain conditions justify the revocation of the transfer decision", stated the court on November 30th.



Photo: Guillaume Périçois, unsplash

The court's decision was taken after Italian judges expressed doubts about the applications of several asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan who had applied for asylum in Italy after initial applications in other EU member states.

Italian state budget

The Italian government intends to cut budget funds for the accommodation of migrants and unaccompanied minors by **15 million euros per year**. At the same time, the funds for implementing changes agreed in parliamentary motions are to be reduced by half. Funds that become available through these changes are to be used for "national security" (defence). This plan has been strongly

criticized, among other reasons, because **the cut in funds for the accommodation of refugees** will further aggravate already **existing humanitarian deficiencies** in the Italian reception system.

Agreement between Italy and Albania

The draft of the agreement between Italy and Albania, introduced by the Council of Ministers, contains a crucial condition for the application of the protocol: The location "where a rescue ship is operating" will be decisive for deciding whether migrants can be brought to Albania or not. Therefore, if a rescue operation of migrants takes place **in international waters**, EU asylum law *does not apply* and Italy will be allowed to accommodate those seeking protection in another country, according to [Brussels](#). Furthermore, the agreement foresees 87 million euros of funding while the total expenditure for the construction of the facilities in Albania **should not exceed 200 million**, according to [government sources](#). This includes the costs for and transfer of police forces, logistical equipment, and costs of the asylum procedure. The outsourcing of reception centers to Albania is a further step in the isolation of the EU and **the externalization of European borders** to countries outside the EU. These developments severely endanger the rights and protection of refugees. However, the legislative procedure is currently suspended as the Albanian Constitutional Court is examining the agreement. The [President of the Constitutional Court](#), Holta Zaçaj, stated: "The procedure for ratifying the agreement has been suspended because more than a quarter of Albanian MPs [members of parliament, note of the author] requested that we examine the constitutionality of the protocol signed between the two countries. We have found that the objection fulfils the admissibility criteria and, according to our rules, it automatically leads to an interruption of the parliamentary procedure for ratification. However, I would like to clarify that we have not examined the validity of the signed protocol."

Situation of refugees

Challenges for newly arrived migrants in Italian prisons

“Archi Porco Rosso”, a counselling centre for people without papers, reports on people who have arrived in Italy irregularly in the last few years and have been detained while being in Italy. They give insights into the problems those people face: from access to work, healthcare, a lack of social benefits to housing. [This article](#) is the last one in 2023 as part of our joint monitoring project.

Most of the people “Archi Porco Rosso” report on come from families with little or no income in their countries of origin. They usually arrive in Italy without family or friends. The lack of public and social support not only leads to economic precarity, but also to tighter criminal laws. Even a rather minor accusation can result in a person's life being turned upside down, while a more serious accusation can lead to decades of imprisonment. These situations would often be easier to resolve for an Italian citizen or someone with more stable circumstances.

Situation at the northern Italian borders

In **Trieste**, the decreasing number of arrivals via the so-called Balkan route is evident. Yet the local reception systems are barely noticing this development as the transfer and distribution of migrants continues to be difficult. Instead, even fewer people are now being redistributed and **hundreds of people are being deliberately "left out in the cold (...) of the streets"**, explains [Gianfranco Schiavone](#), President of the Italian Consortium for Solidarity (ICS).

The deportation detention centre in Milan

The Milan deportation detention center (Centro di permanenza e rimpatrio, CPR) in Via Corelli has been run by the private company Martinina from Pontecagnano Faiano (Salerno) since April 2022. In October 2022, it received funding of **1.2 million euros** from the prefecture for the management of the centre. The directors [Consiglia Caruso](#) and

[Alessandro Forlenza](#) are now under investigation for "fraud in public procurement" and "bid rigging".



Via Corelli, CPR Milano, photo [ASGI](#)

The CPR itself was placed under public administration by the prosecutor's office. It is not the first time that the CPR in Milan has been criticized: Former senator Gregorio De Falco and non-governmental organizations have long denounced the conditions in the deportation detention center. But only in December the results of an inspection were published in a report by the consulting expert on healthcare in prisons, [Nicola Cocco](#). The most severe problems, laid out in the report, include **a lack of language mediation services, recreational activities, and medication, inadequate medical and psychological-psychiatric care, and poor food**, some of which is "smelly, spoilt and expired". The operators of the CPR are therefore accused of making false promises to the prefecture regarding the primary care of the detainees. In addition, psychotropic medications have been misused (a detailed background article on the developments in the CPR can be found [here](#)). Whether the conditions in the detention centre will actually change after being publicly administered remains questionable. The numerous emergency situations, infringements, and systematic lacks in the past point out **the uselessness and dangerousness of these centers for migrants**. They should be abolished, as [Valentina Calderone](#) (guarantor of the rights of people deprived of their liberty in the municipality of Rome) summarizes in this article: "The CPRs were set up in 1998 to detain people without a valid residence permit on European territory. Over the years, they have changed names many times, but never the essence of what they are. (...) Protests are frequent; fires or the destruction of entire sections often lead to the complete or partial shutdown of

these centers. (...) The percentage of repatriations has never been higher than 50%, and when, as now, the maximum length of stay has been increased to 18 months, it has only brought more suffering to the people (...). **The CPRs are the mask behind which we can hide the failure of our migration policy** and which we can display when we must declare ourselves inflexible. (...) On the back of a few hundred people a year'.

Situation of seasonal workers

On the so-called "click day", **82,550 migrant seasonal workers** (from countries outside the EU) registered – while capacities for seasonal workers in agriculture and the tourism-hotel sector are 40,000 positions per year. The numbers for the 2023-2025 period have been set in the new three-year Dpcm (Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers) of September 27th for 2023-2025 period. Thus, the number of requests exceeded the available places by far, **confirming the labor shortage in the Italian agricultural sector**. As pickers in the fruit, vegetable pickers, and grape harvests, tractor drivers and greenhouse workers, foreign seasonal workers support many "agricultural districts" and are a well-integrated part of the economic and social structure, explains the largest association of Italian agriculture "Coldiretti" ([Confederazione Nazionale Coltivatori Diretti](#)) after analysing the "Click Day" statistics. **About a third of food in the Italian agricultural sector** is produced by foreign seasonal workers. Furthermore, they provided "32% of the total number of working days needed in this sector in 2022", says [Ettore Prandini](#), President of Coldiretti. The largest groups of seasonal workers in Italy come from India, Morocco, Albania, Senegal, Pakistan, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Macedonia.



Informal settlement of farmworkers, photo: Alberto Biondo

Altogether, Italian companies in various sectors have submitted around 608,000 applications for the "legal entry" of foreign workers for 2024 - that is **more than four times as many** applications as the places made available by the Meloni government for the same period (136,000 places). "Nevertheless, it is always said that there is "no work" and "no place for everyone" in Italy," commented [Matteo Villa](#) from the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) on X.

Hardly anyone thinks about accommodation for those seasonal workers. Every year, new, temporary ad hoc solutions are found: Just recently, the corridors and changing rooms of the [municipal stadium](#) in **Sciacca (Agrigento region)** were converted into a **temporary reception center** for around 20 North African seasonal workers employed in the harvesting of olives. The center is under surveillance by the police and carabinieri.

"When informal settlements are "privatized": the 2023 olive harvest in Campobello di Mazara against the policy of forced evictions" is the title of a [detailed report](#) on this year's **seasonal work in Campobello di Mazara** from September to November. The report was written by Giulia Gianguzza and Elena Luda from the Sans Papiers Drop-In by Arci Porco Rosso. In May last year, an informal settlement in the former cement factory in Campobello di Mazara was **evicted** in "a widely condemned manner". The eviction has been particularly characterized by failures of the institutions involved.

At the same time, the seasonal workers were denounced, blamed and even rejected: these workers were made even more vulnerable "because 1) they did not know where to stay and had to "rely" on middlemen; 2) they ended up being placed in a building that was effectively the property of their employer and were therefore even more exposed to blackmail, labor exploitation and power dynamics through control; and 3) their possibility of receiving socio-legal support was drastically reduced due to increased control and blackmail", explains the report. **The privatization of informal housing is a provocation**, as "informal settlements are often built on private land, perhaps even at the middle of a controversy, such as in the former cement factory". One resident comment on seeing the remains of his house, a shack that was razed to the ground by a bulldozer on the orders of the prefecture of Trapani, with the simple words "(I)t's not easy".

If you want to know more about the reality of migrant workers' life in the former camp of Campobello di Mazara, Sicily, see our magazine "[Spotlight Italy – Zones of Lawlessness](#)".

The end of 2023

A year comes to an end... unfortunately, there was not much positive news to report on in 2023 either. But we, together with our network, will continue our efforts in 2024 to report on human rights violations in Italy and the struggles against! [Here](#) you can review the year with our Scirocco publications!

We wish you a few quiet days and we will "read you" again in our next Scirocco edition in mid-January 2024!

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found under "Projects" on our [homepage](#), in previous issues of [Scirocco](#), in our magazine "[Spotlight Italy - Zones of Lawlessness](#)" and in our new podcast episodes "[Al confine](#)".

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