



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 06/2023
Palermo, 29.03.2023



Scirocco **borderline-europe, Sicily -** **Part 06/2023**

Palermo, 29.03.2023

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

New government decrees

Already in the last [Scirocco](#) we reported about the new decree 20/2023, which was approved at the Council of Ministers meeting on March 9 in Cutro. What the government came up with this time can be found [here](#).

The Italian government issued another decree on March 17, expanding the list of safe third countries. Ivory Coast, Gambia and Georgia are now also considered [safe third countries](#), in addition to Albania, Algeria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Cap Verde, Ghana, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, Morocco, Montenegro, Senegal, Serbia and Tunisia. People fleeing these countries and who come to Italy only go through a fast-track procedure when applying for international protection. It is also easier for them to be detained and deported.

Balkan route

According to a [2022 report by Frontex](#), the numbers of arrivals via the so-called Balkan route have risen in comparison to those of 2016. Due to the increasingly problematic land route, many people are now also fleeing via the extremely dangerous route by boat directly from

Turkey towards Italy. 18,000 people are said to have reached Italy by sea, which coincides with [borderline-europe's](#) counts. 118% more people fleeing Afghanistan are said to have reached Italy, according to a report in the daily [Il Messaggero](#). The reason for this is also the impossibility to obtain asylum in Greece and to build a new life there.

In our previous issues, we reported about the homelessness of refugees in the Italian-Slovenian border region and the political unwillingness to redistribute people to other regions of Italy. These arrivals are the fault of the Croatian government, according to the region's security deputy, [Pierpaolo Roberti](#), who would let all the people on the move, pass. But we know the images of the borders on the Balkan route. They are characterized above all by [violence and deterrence](#). In another attempt to deter and prosecute people on the move as well as "traffickers", the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region put into operation [65 photo cameras](#) in the border area of Trieste and Gorizia, which record the movements in less guarded places. The photos are to be used to make arrests and enable "smuggling" trials, and photographed people could be deported more quickly. This adds Italy to the list of countries such as Croatia, Romania and Hungary, all of which equip their borders with certain technologies to prevent asylum seekers from crossing the border.

Italy's bilateral efforts

To curb migration, Italy continues trying to enter into various bilateral agreements with different countries of origin and transit. Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and Prime Minister Giorgia [Meloni](#) are [calling for](#) concrete action by the EU to respond to the migration situation in Italy.

Also, a meeting between Italian Foreign Minister Tajani and representatives from Slovenia and Croatia will take place in Rome to coordinate a [planned cooperation](#) regarding the Balkan route. More information on Italy's bilateral relations with Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey can be found [here](#) and more specifically on Italy's cooperation with Libya [here](#).



La Goulette, Port of Tunis. Photo: Ludovica Gualandi

EU and Italy

The five "Med countries" (Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Spain and Italy) call for a [stronger focus](#) in EU migration policy on asylum seekers who have already been rejected and their deportation. Furthermore, the five countries urge northern European EU members to accept more asylum seekers received by coastal states, following a voluntary and solidarity-based relocation scheme. According to the Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarachi, in 2022 only 1% of people on the move were accepted for relocation from countries of arrival to other EU countries.

The demand of the "Med 5" regarding deportations goes hand in hand with the [plan](#) recently published by the EU Commission, which also provides improved coordination of EU countries for deportations. In this regard, the EU

Commission has made recommendations on the mutual recognition of expulsion orders. For example, EU countries are to mutually recognize expulsion decisions in order to prevent people on the move from traveling to another country without permission after their asylum application has been rejected in one country and trying again there. This approach is intended to prevent [secondary movements](#) within the Union and to enable the second country to carry out repatriation.

Open Arms

On March 24, 2023, there was a new hearing in the Open Arms case against former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in Palermo. Salvini's lawyers expressed satisfaction as they believed they had uncovered inconsistencies in the conduct of the NGO Open Arms in the case of the rescue of 55 people on the move in 2019. Moreover, according to the defense, it showed that Open Arms was involved in [human trafficking](#). It has only been known since a few months that an Italian submarine had tracked the movements of Open Arms, but had not intervened or brought other ships to help when it rescued people in distress at sea. Open Arms filed a complaint against the Navy crew for "failure to render assistance." In the case of Open Arms, the defense is also trying to portray the rescue as "unnecessary" because the boat was not in danger. So once again, "prevention of unauthorized entry" is pitted against sea rescue. We have seen in Cutro where this leads to - about 100 people lost their lives because of this strategy of the authorities.

Italy's border with France

[A judge in Turin has acquitted 18 people](#) who illegally occupied a house in Piedmont in northwestern Italy and turned it into a shelter for refugees and people on the move. The activists were helping people who had difficulties crossing the border into France.

In addition, a demonstration with more than five hundred people took place on March 17 at the [Montgenèvre Pass](#). This was a protest against the unscrupulous actions of the border police and the further tightening of migration policies in France. Coming from the Balkan route, about 10,000 people, including many families and unaccompanied minors, cross the border between Claviere in Italy and Montgenèvre in France every year. At the Montgenèvre Pass, volunteers have been organizing themselves for years to seek out and provide assistance to arriving refugees and people on the move. As Anne Gautier from Tous Migrants reports, the volunteers are constantly intimidated by the border police, even though, according to Gautier, they themselves have committed "hundreds of rights violations" in recent years.

Right-wing Narrative of the Invasion

The number of migrants arriving in Italy has been significantly [overestimated by the Italian intelligence service for years](#). Forecasts have predicted an "invasion" of people on the move several times in the past 15 years, but this never materialized. Even in the record year 2016, only 181,436 people fleeing their countries arrived in Italy, while for this year 400,000 were predicted by the intelligence service. With these numbers, the Italian intelligence service once again serves the right-wing

narrative of the "danger of invasion" in Italy.

Situation of the refugees

Cutro

The number of victims of the Cutro shipwreck is now [91 people](#).



Demonstration in Palermo, March 18, 2023: Stop the dying, now!

[Mayor Antonio Ceraso](#) declared that he had made the Cutro cemetery available for the purpose of establishing an Islamic cemetery there. While the identification of the victims continues, several demonstrations have taken place in Italy in memory of the victims of Cutro. In [Palermo](#), on March 18, 2023, citizens called on the Italian government to end the massacre and take preventive and rescue measures at sea. [A detailed and highly readable report](#) on the work with the bereaved, the difficulties of identifying the dead and the transfers has been written by the group MemMed.

Hotspot Lampedusa

Region President Renato Schifani and Head of the Department of Civil Rights and Immigration, Valerio Valentini, paid a visit of about 10 minutes to the hotspot. On the spot, they made an [overview](#) of the catastrophic conditions and declared to initiate further plane transfers. Several

hundred people are expected to leave the hotspot as soon as possible, with priority given to [women and children](#). Currently there are about [2500 people](#) in the overcrowded hotspot Lampedusa (with a capacity of less than 400 places).

Regarding the fact that there are unaccompanied minors in the hotspot, who legally are not allowed to be there, [Schifani](#) explained that there is no emergency situation because they are "adult minors", "no one under the age of ten" [sic!]

Pre-removal Detention Centers

The CPR (Pre-removal detention center) in [Turin](#) was temporarily closed for the first time in 25 years. Unrest at the facility led to the premises being rendered unusable and people being transferred. The remaining six people on the move went on hunger strike for several days, whereupon they were also transferred.

Furthermore, there are new findings in the case of the Tunisian Wissem Ben Abdel Latif (we already reported on this in our magazine [Streiflicht](#)). According to the results of the autopsy, it is now proven that Latif died at the age of 26 due to the administration of three different [narcotics](#), chained to a hospital bed in Rome. Two doctors and two nurses are [under investigation](#).

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

Contact

[borderline-europe](#)

Human Rights without borders e.V.

<https://www.borderline-europe.de/>

italia@borderline-europe.de

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

PRO ASYL
DER EINZELFALL ZÄHLT.