



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 01/2023
Palermo, 20.01.2023



Scirocco borderline-europe, Sicily - Part 01/2023

Palermo, 20.01.2023

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

With a new legislative decree dated January 2, 2023, the post-fascist Italian government is attempting to further **reduce the rescue capacity of sea rescue organizations**. We already reported on the new decree law in our last [Central Med Info \(CMI\)](#), now we have published a [joint statement](#) together with numerous sea rescue organizations and the NGO Human Rights at Sea demanding that "EU member states finally **adhere to the existing international legal framework** and allow civilian sea rescue organizations to carry out their missions without government obstruction." Although the decree is ostensibly aimed at obstructing the work of sea rescue organizations, Italy is primarily risking an [increase in deaths](#) in the Mediterranean.

A new [report of the Scientific Services in the Bundestag](#) criticizes this legislative decree from Italy and points to the **breach of international law by Italy**. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also comes to the same conclusion and draws attention to the fact that the responsibility for the assignment of a safe port and the asylum procedures that take place thereafter lie

with the states and not with the sea rescue organizations.

Bilateral agreements

By renewing their [bilateral agreement](#), Italy and Libya manifested once again their **human rights violating cooperation against the Movements of Migration**. While Italy provides logistical and financial work, the so-called Libyan coast guard is in charge of intercepting refugees by force on the Mediterranean Sea and returning them to Libya, where they are subjected to physical and psychological violence by Libyan authorities. Now representatives from Italy and the Libyan Interior Minister, Emad Al-Trabelsi, were again observed [during joint conversations](#), which were hardly mentioned in the Italian press.

A **summit on the Italian migration dossier** was also held in early January, attended by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Deputy Prime Ministers Matteo Salvini & Antonio Tajani, Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi and the General Director of the Department of Security Intelligence (Dis), Elisabetta Belloni. [According to reports](#), the Italian government is working on further **bilateral agreements with African states**, so-called countries of origin of migrants, to prevent the migration to Europe. In addition, other **tactics to limit entry into Italy** were discussed, which may override currently valid European and human rights obligations.

Open Arms trial

On January 13, another day of trial took place in the **Open Arms case against Matteo Salvini** for the blockade of a

civilian rescue ship carrying 147 rescued people in August 2019 (we reported [here](#)). But this time the lawyer of the former interior minister shot herself in the foot, as the news agency AGI commented in a report. She wanted to clarify that the Interior Ministry had ordered the landing after the redistribution of the refugees to other EU states had been discussed. But this information is not correct, an administrative court decision had finally put an end to the inhumane blockade. Accordingly the public prosecutor's office of Agrigento ordered the confiscation of the ship, which was the only possibility to bring the people finally ashore. The Open Arms was released shortly after. It remains to be seen how the court will react to these facts.

Dublin repatriations

A [circular \("circolare"\)](#) issued by the Italian Ministry of the Interior on December 05, 2022 states that there is currently no reception capacity in Italy and that **EU states should therefore refrain from Dublin transfers to Italy**, with the exception of family reunifications of unaccompanied minors and [bilateral repatriation agreements](#). With this circular, the Italian state is evading European obligations to accept so-called Dublin returnees - asylum seekers who are returned to the state where they were first registered within the EU and where they must apply for a protection or residence title under European law. As a result of this blockade, **uncertainty** has increased, especially among counseling centers for refugees and migrants. Due to **contradictory statements by Italian politicians**, it is [still unclear](#) whether the circular is now valid - which would be

desirable for refugees who have continued their journey - or has been withdrawn. Return flights from Germany to Italy have therefore been suspended by [Lufthansa](#) until March 31, 2023.

Detention centers for deportees

With a [joint appeal](#), more than 40 NGOs reacted to the possible **opening of a new detention center for migrants (CPR) in Tuscany**, which was discussed at a regional conference of public security. There were numerous reasons against the reopening of another detention center for deportees, including the **serious negative impact** on the lives and rights of detained persons, such as the rights to legal aid, health, a life in dignity and freedom of communication with the outside world, according to the appeal. The violation of these rights is well documented by a large number of reports, books, documentaries and studies of various kinds. Detention centers are an **instrument of oppression** and a **place of suffering** for affected persons.

Just last month, [a man died in Brindisi deportation center](#) after a fire broke out.

European migration policy

Arrivals in Italy have [not decreased](#) despite the anti-immigration rhetoric of the Italian government: In December 2022 alone, officially 10,799 people arrived in Italy, in the same period of the previous year, there were only 4,534 people, and according to the Ministry of the Interior, in 2022 a total of around **105,140** people reached Italy by sea. The new year is also already characterized by [unusually high arrival figures](#): On January 3 alone 1,192 migrants reached Italian shores within 24 hours. Overall, the

arrivals of the first half of January in 2023 are **ten times** higher than in the same period in 2022, as the good weather conditions made a crossing possible. Due to the large load for the Italian reception system ("accoglienza"), the Italian government continues to push for a European migration policy. But that is of little interest to the **new Swedish EU presidency**: [Lars Danielsson](#), the Swedish ambassador to Europe, already announced that, contrary to the wishes of the Italian government, **no agreement for a common EU migration pact** was in sight in the next six months. Sweden is currently governed by a coalition of several parties, including the far-right "Sweden Democrats." The year 2023 could be decisive for the [reform of EU legislation](#), starting with the **extraordinary Council meeting in February**; in addition, the [EU Commission's action plans for 2023](#) include the definition of a "clear and solid framework" for the European migration and asylum system (solidarity mechanism).

Situation of Refugees

The Italian reception system is **operating at full capacity**, because due to the winter, which has so far been mostly stormless, the number of arrivals remains at a high level. The Mediterranean island of Lampedusa and the regions of Sicily and Calabria are therefore dependent on the [logistical support from other regions](#) for the accommodation and care of refugees and migrants, as well as on [financial assistance](#) from the government (as recently awarded to the [municipalities of Augusta and Pozzallo](#)). [Emma Capogrossi](#), Councillor of Ancona, draws attention to the fact that there has

not been created a single functional system to deal with this phenomenon and there wasn't found any means to avoid humanitarian emergencies in the last 20 years, in which there have been migratory movements towards Italy.

Northern Italy

However, living conditions are also poor in other parts of the country, for example in the north of Italy, where refugees and migrants mostly enter via the so-called **Balkan route at the border triangle of Italy-Austria-Slovenia**: In [Treviso](#), dozens of people had to sleep in the cold in front of the police station for the past three months, as no one is taking care of their asylum applications and they are therefore in a **legal limbo**. More than 360 asylum seekers are housed provisionally in former barracks.

At its northeastern border, **Italy is pushings refugees back to Slovenia**. The Ministry of the Interior speaks of "informal readmissions" and refers to an agreement with Slovenia from 1996 that has [never been ratified](#). With the rejection of asylum seekers at the Italian-Slovenian border, Italy prevents them from exercising their right to international protection. At the beginning of 2021, the court in Rome had suspended the refolements but a directive issued by the Ministry of the Interior on November 28, 2022, has now reactivated them.

This constitutes an illegal practice and therefore a **further breach of law on the part of the Italian government**, since the judgment of the Court has never been overturned. The right-wing Lega welcomes the resumption. The overcrowded centers on the Italian side, so the Lega, are showing that "masses" are arriving. But these overcrowded

centers exist due to the incapacity to create a functioning reception system in Italy.

borderline-europe
Human Rights without borders e.V.
<https://www.borderline-europe.de/italia@borderline-europe.de>

The reception situation at the [Italian-French border near Ventimiglia](#) is similarly tense. While France has been systematically violating the Schengen Agreement for months by heavily policing trains and border crossings and turning away fugitives at the borders, Italian institutions remain at a complete standstill regarding the support of people without shelter. We reported on the **disastrous reception conditions** and the utilization of the Accoglienza system throughout Italy in [previous issues of Scirocco](#).

Publications

And the good things come last: In a new form our magazine "**Streiflicht Italien**" has been published! In this issue we talk about "**non-places**" for refugees. The reception system, deportation centers, the Dublin Regulation and the unequal treatment of refugees from Ukraine and other countries are our topics this time. You can find the new "[Streiflicht Italien](#)" here.

Find more information on the situation in Italy and previous issues of the Scirocco under "Projects" on our homepage.

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.

Contact
