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20.05.2026: The extraordinary reception centres – an extraordinary system becomes the norm

On 30 April 2026, the State Police and the Prefecture's Inspectorate closed two extraordinary reception centres (CAS) located in the Leonforte area in Sicily due to serious sanitary issues. The occupants were transferred to other facilities in the vicinity. A newly published report by ActionAid and openpolis shows that this case is not an exception but reflects a widespread pattern.

The report "*La frontiera, ovunque*" from April 2026 (The Border Everywhere) debunks the Italian government's narrative of a "migration crisis" and instead demonstrates how this state of "emergency" is being fabricated through political decisions. The system of extraordinary reception centres (CAS), originally *created as a temporary solution* to fill gaps in ordinary reception facilities during periods of high arrivals, has become the norm. In 2024, the CAS facilities hosted 71.9% of people in the reception system, while the Reception and Integration System (SAI), which is intended to be the ordinary system, hosted only 24.7%.

CAS facilities offer fewer services and inclusion pathways than the SAI system, trapping people in precarious situations without adequate access to integration support. The report also highlights a strong trend towards larger facilities and the growth of profit-oriented operators. As a result, centres increasingly focus not on providing high-quality services to their residents but rather on cutting costs and improving operational efficiency. This further *standardises their operation* and ignores the needs of individuals. Consequently, the focus of the system is shifting from providing reception and integration support to mere containment of People on the Move.

Following this trend several severe issues emerge. Many CAS facilities are overcrowded – in 2024, almost one thousand out of a total of six thousand centres were operating over capacity – while centres in other regions still had many free spaces available. In 2023, at least 823 unaccompanied minors were accommodated in facilities for adults. Although this is allowed under decree 133/2023 only under exceptional circumstances where there is no space in adequate reception facilities, the practice appears to become normalised. Even though the decree allows only temporary accommodation for up to 90 days, longer periods are becoming increasingly common, with the longest recorded stay reaching 1,413 days. ActionAid reports that the accommodation of minors in adult centres occurs even when places are available in centres dedicated to their needs. This exposes some of the most vulnerable people to even greater risks and limits their access to education and age-appropriate services.

The case of Leonforte has shown that inspections are extremely important in ensuring that centres adhere to minimum standards. However, the report highlights that inspections

cover only 19.1% of facilities, with significant geographical disparities. Moreover, even when inspections are carried out, they are often limited to formal checks.

More recently, in [Vignanello](#), a town in Lazio, opposition has formed against government plans to build a new CAS facility in a former nightclub located in an industrial area. They have [collected over 2000 signatures](#) in the town and surrounding municipalities against these plans. Instead, local actors are calling for the investment and expansion of the SAI system, including widespread integration, training and job placement projects. They oppose the creation of new spaces of segregation and instead advocate for policies based on genuine integration, developed together with the local communities and their social realities.

The report and the cases of Leonforte and Vignanello illustrate how the Italian government is using the narrative of a “migration crisis” to justify exceptional measures within the Italian reception system and the lowering of standards. This has allowed a system intended only for exceptional situations to become the norm. As a result, some of the most vulnerable people arriving in Italy are exposed to greater risks, preventing People on the Move from fully accessing the rights to which they are entitled.

