



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 2/2022
Palermo, 23.02.2022



Scirocco borderline-europe, Sicily - Part 2/2022

Palermo, 23.02.2022

Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-Schirokko] is a south-easterly, hot strong wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean to Sicily and Italy's north for often only a few hours. This short info in the age of the pandemic will be published from March 2021 in an approx. bi-weekly rhythm. The Scirocco replaces the Corona Update Italy.

Political and Social Situation

Due to a lack of capacity in the 2nd decision-making instance, the [Italian Supreme Court](#) has been overloaded in asylum cases since 2017. **The abolition of the appeal level in international protection proceedings** is considered one of the main causes of this situation: from about 300 cases per year before the abolition, there are now over 10,000 cases (as of 2019) to be decided. As a result, asylum seekers are often in a legal limbo, which leads to difficulties and uncertainties regarding their social and professional integration. In addition, the number of positive asylum decisions has decreased. The [Catholic non-governmental organization Fondazione Migrantes sul diritto d'asilo](#) sums up that with the Decreto Sicurezza ("Security Decree") under the former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, the risk of asylum seekers to enter in precarious living situations has increased significantly. Italy's asylum system has been based on an "institutionalization of emergency" for years and a self-determined and inclusive reception model is still not in sight. **Since 2013, Italy's asylum system is solely oriented towards short-term emergencies**, a phenomenon that is known as the so-called institutionalization of the state of emergency.

Furthermore, the Italian state invests in the externalization of its own borders and the forced repatriation and detention of migrants and asylum seekers in Libya through financial and logistical support of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. Since the appointment of Luciana Lamorgese as Minister of the Interior in September 2019, the situation has somewhat improved, however, even the Draghi government is pursuing a **strategy of closure and repression**.

To this day, Italy and Libya have been keeping quiet about what was stated in the joint agreement on cooperation, the "Moratorium of Understanding" (MoU). In 2019, the newspaper [Avvenire](#) publicized the visit of a Libyan delegation to Italy that included Libyan militia leader Abdurahman al-Milad ("Bija"), but more detailed information about the visit was not provided. Avvenire then revealed that **Bija used Italian-owned vessels to conduct illegal pullbacks after returning to Libya**. Once again, the cooperation of European states with Libyan authorities manifests itself in illegal and inhumane control practices and pullbacks on the Mediterranean.



Photo by Patrick Robert Doyle, Unsplash.

A study by the [Hermes Center for Transparency and Digital Human Rights](#) on the collection and storing of personal and biometric data of migrants has shown that migrants – in contrast to persons with an

Italian or European citizenship – cannot control the use, collection and storing of their personal data. The AFIS database contains data of migrants as well as of criminals and does not differentiate the storing location. In this way, all persons registered in the AFIS database are automatically criminalized. Since neither the database nor its underlying algorithm were allowed for inspection, the handling of biometric data of vulnerable individuals remains hidden and thus uncontrollable for potential human rights violations such as racial profiling. “The testing of digital technologies in the field of immigration is a historically unique phenomenon, as migrants are portrayed as a group that needs to be controlled, tracked, and monitored because they are outside the borders and thus outside the law”, the researchers explained.

According to the [newspaper Domani](#), **Italy's aversion towards migrants is alarmingly high, stating that 79% of those surveyed expressed aversion to immigration.** This puts Italy in fourth place globally after South Africa (89%), Belgium (81%) and Peru (80%). While the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a shift in public attention, the population's disapproval rating has dropped by only three percentage points. Despite the devastatingly high numbers, however, there were no political consequences following the study.

Situation of refugees in Italy

It is one story among many that reveal **the cruel conditions of flights via Libya**: In December 2021, [Yoel, a 44-year-old Eritrean](#), decided to leave a refugee camp in Ethiopia where he had been living for four years and moved to Libya in order to improve his employment opportunities. Arriving in Libya, he was arbitrarily detained for several months. Through his detention, Yoel got to

know the notorious "Ghut Shaal" detention center in Tripoli, where according to him some 2,500 people were held.



List of persons who died at borders by [UNITED](#).

Because of the terrible and violent conditions in Libya, the father of five decided to flee to Europe. For him and many other people on board a little wooden boat, it was clear that they would rather jump into the water and kill themselves than to be taken back to Libya by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, Yoel says.

This **violence and torture in Libyan detention camps** is still ignored by the European Union. Therefore, human rights activists are once again calling on the EU to end its cooperation with Libya and to accept refugees in need of protection from Libyan camps.

Likewise, **Amnesty International launched a petition to repeal the Italy-Libya agreement**, which is considered the basis of cooperation between the two countries. "In the last five years," Amnesty International says, "more than 82,000 people have been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya: men, women and children subjected to arbitrary detention, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, rape and sexual violence, forced labor and unlawful killings". To prevent an automatic renewal of the agreement between Italy and Libya for another three years in February 2023, **Amnesty International calls for a rapid**

termination and hopes for an end to the Italian state's annual funding of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. In the Italian Parliament, the termination is currently demanded by at least 40 MPs from the center-left bloc (centro-sinistra) and the Forza Italia party.

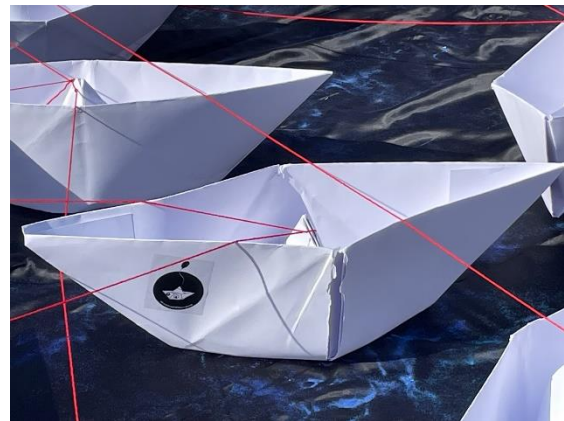


Demonstration in Ventimiglia in July 2021.

While trying to **cross the Italian-French border unnoticed** on the [roof of a regional train](#), one person died from an electric shock of a high-voltage power line. In a [joint appeal](#) to French, Italian and local authorities, **the Italian lawyers' association Asgi and other civil society organizations denounced the situation at the French-Italian border.** It is undeniable that the attacks and deaths in the border regions can be classified as a side effect of deliberate political decisions taken at the local, national and European level, the appeal said. The organizations call for the urgent transformation of the European border regime and respect for fundamental rights and the right to asylum.

With [one hundred white paper boats connected by a red thread](#), a commemoration to the dead and missing at sea was held in Palermo on February 6. With the statement "**migrate to live and not to die**" as well as the associated demand for the **right to freedom of movement**, initiatives throughout Europe and beyond took part in the **transnational protest day CommemorAction**. Similar events took place in [Messina](#), [Napoli](#) and [L'Aquila](#).

Annually on February 6, collective protest actions against border violence and the demand for an end to the racist persecution of refugees are combined with commemorations for the deceased and missing, in order to create a space for the families of the victims and support them in their search for answers and justice for their loved ones. The cross-border commemorations are organized by relatives and friends of the dead and missing as well as citizens and activists who advocate for the right to migration and freedom of movement. **The first CommemorAction was organized in 2020 in Oujda (Morocco) by relatives and friends of the disappeared of the tragedy of February 6, 2014.**



CommemorAction in Palermo.

On that day, more than 200 migrants tried to enter the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from Morocco. When they reached the beach of Tarajal, the Spanish Guardia Civil killed at least 15 people. To this day, this act is not recognized as murder and the responsible border guards have been acquitted.

[People die on quarantine ships.](#) The case of Abdallah Saïds, a young Somali who was held on a quarantine ship in September 2020 and transferred to a hospital far too late, is still not solved. The Sicilian prosecutor's office is investigating the case. An expert report stated that no interpreter was available for Abdallah although he already had symptoms when he came on board. However, it also

states that he probably would have died even with immediate treatment. *Probability* does not equate *certainty* and he was detained on board for two weeks. Now the prosecutor in charge must decide whether the case will go to trial. Besides Abdallah Said, another three people have lost their lives on quarantine ships so far, which makes it clear that they must finally be abolished.

For more information on the situation in Italy, see our Central Med Info and the previous issues of the 'Scirocco' on our [homepage](#).

Note to the readers of our Streiflicht Italy: Starting this year, our Streiflicht Italy will be published only twice a year with a new layout!

Contact

borderline-europe
Menschenrechte ohne Grenzen e.V.
<https://www.borderline-europe.de/>
italia@borderline-europe.de