



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 3/2022
Palermo, 03.03.2022



Scirocco borderline-europe, Sicily - Part 3/2022

Palermo, 03.03.2022

Scirocco [ʃiˈrɒkko-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

A [leaked document](#) reveals that the European Union plans to introduce an **operational coordination mechanism for monitoring and coordinating the 'external dimension of migration' (MOCADDEM)** within the next 12 months. The goals of this mechanism would include building a more coherent strategy among EU member states and streamlining bilateral migration interests – so-called 'mobility partnerships' – to manage migration movements in third (or non-member) countries. Experience has shown that agreements with third countries tend to be negotiated **informally, non-transparently, and far from the public eye of the civil society**. In addition, the EU wants to politicize humanitarian aid as a means of containing migration movements and use it to generate political pressure. The leaked document shows once again how the European Union is trying to exhaust all its means to ward off migration movements and push for an externalization of European borders. This approach has also been pursued by the Italian government for years, the non-transparent Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya is only one prominent example (see [Scirocco 1/2022](#)).

With a racist proposal to **introduce codes of conduct for migrants to stay in public**

spaces in the municipality of Caltanissetta, the right-wing party Lega is trying to stir up sentiments against refugees and asylum seekers, blaming them as scapegoats for the decay of Italian cities. This initiative has been condemned as shameful, racist, and dangerous by various [individuals](#) and [institutions](#), as well as the mayor of Caltanissetta, [Roberto Gambino](#). Sicilian MP [Erasmus Palazzotto](#) drew attention to historical antecedents of racist codes of conduct and called on the Lega to apologize immediately to the migrant community. Local politics, he said, must instead address **insecurities and the consequences of corruption and the mafia**.



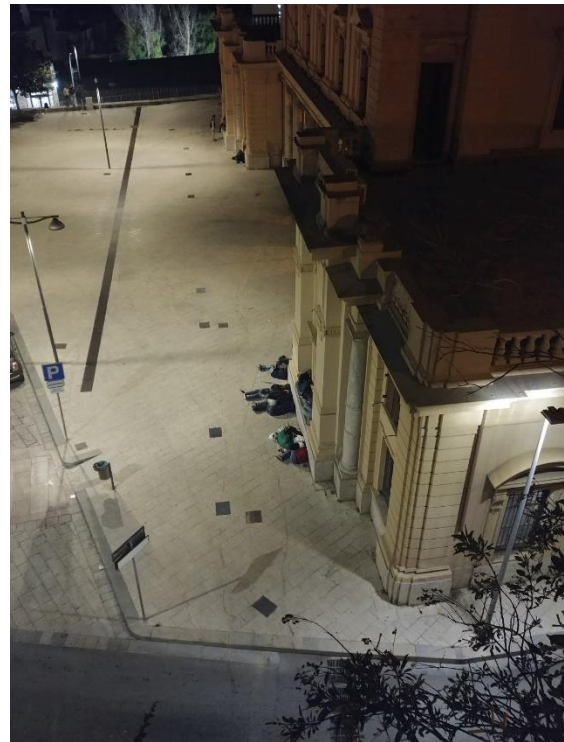
Room in a shelter in Sicily. Photo by Borderline Sicilia.

In the last three years, the number of migrants arriving in Italy by sea has decreased significantly. In 2021, for example, around [66,770 arrivals](#) were recorded, compared to [more than 181,000](#) in the same period in 2016. However, **the Italian reception system has not been reformed and still bears the characteristics of a structural emergency**. According to the report ["Centri d'Italia 2021: Bandi, gestori e costi dell'accoglienza di richiedenti asilo e rifugiati"](#) which was published by Openpolis and ActionAid, a lack of transparency in the reception system, a lack of consistency in procedures for awarding administrative

contracts on the national territory, a lack of homogeneity in estimates and expenditure items, and difficulties in accessing data are still the norm in Italy. [Fabrizio Coresi of ActionAid](#) adds that a systematic approach to the reception of migrants is only possible if a **broad reception is promoted in public sponsorship**. The current reception system perpetuates inequalities in the distribution of rights and services.

In the [case of CAS \(Centro di accoglienza straordinaria, extraordinary reception center\) Mattei in Bologna](#), the Italian Association of Lawyers for Studies on Migration (ASGI) has obtained that **the right to health of asylum seekers must be protected also in extraordinary reception centers** and that the state measures to contain the Covid 19 pandemic must be guaranteed accordingly. This is closely linked to the principle of solidarity, which aims to prevent discriminatory forms of protection of particularly vulnerable persons, according to the Court of Cassation.

Following the [Charta of Lampedusa](#) (2014) and the [Charta of Palermo](#) (2015), six Italian cities – Palermo, Bari, Milan, Naples, Rome, and Turin – have now developed a [new Charta for the Integration of Refugees](#) together with the UNHCR. The Charta aims to **strengthen cooperation and exchange of experiences** in the field of social, cultural, and economic integration just as of beneficiaries of international protection between cities. The Charta obliges the cities to participate in the strengthening of the national reception system and to support the integration of refugees into the Italian society through volunteer and mentoring programs as well as cultural, educational, and sporting activities.



There's no question of integration – Refugees camp at Agrigento train station. Photo by Borderline Sicilia.

Furthermore, the signatory municipalities clarify that the **integration of refugees enriches their communities**, and that **harmonious development is possible** in a "dynamic process based on participation". The creation of shared spaces, i.e. multipurpose centers as a focal point for all basic services, is intended to enable quick access to important documents as well as individual support in the search for housing and employment. It remains to be seen whether this Charta will have practical implications or remain just another paper.

Situation of refugees in Italy

We have already reported on "scafisti", migrants marked and prosecuted as "smugglers", [here](#) and in [previous issues of Scirocco](#). At the moment, there is an **examination of the case of the four Libyan soccer players [Joma, Ali, Abdelrahman, and Mohannad](#)**, who were held responsible by the Italian judiciary for a 2015 tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea and sentenced to [30-year](#)

[prison terms](#) for human trafficking and intentional homicide.



Joma, Ali, Abdelrahman and Muhannad played for Ahli Bengazi, Al-Madina Club and Libyan Tahadi Club respectively.

There are strong doubts about the guilt of the four Libyans as, according to the Italian judiciary, any person who actively participated in the journey across the Mediterranean is considered a "scafista."

This implies more subsequent and often arbitrary arrests. The young men have been deprived of any perspective by being sentenced: "I suffer a lot in prison, I am the victim of an injustice. The Italian justice system has put an end to my life [...]. I have lost my ambition and my future," writes Mohannad in a letter from prison.

The arbitrariness with which the Italian judiciary hands out convictions can also be witnessed in the case of the now 24-year-old Ivorian [Ousmane Camara](#), who was **innocently arrested and spent more than four years in prison** before he was now been exonerated - after three trials.

The Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Lampedusa have always been a place to experience firsthand the movements of migration as well as the attempts to manage and control them. Here, it can also be observed that a **flight across the Mediterranean Sea in winter is particularly dangerous due to the bad**

weather. The number of shipwrecks and deaths at sea is always high during the cold months. According to the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#), more than 165 people have gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea since the beginning of this year alone, including at least two children. A situation that has been known for 20 years, as [Marta Bernardini of Mediterranean Hope](#) explains.

A consequence of these shipwrecks can be found on cemeteries throughout Sicily: **[Anonymous graves of migrants who died in accidents at sea can be found on many cemeteries in remote places throughout the isle.](#)** Relatives have little chance of finding the remains of their family member or friend, as the search for the identity of the deceased is neglected in most cases and the marking of the graves hardly allows any conclusions about the deceased.



Migrant graves without names in the cemetery in Palermo. Photo by Borderline Sicilia.

As Sicilian cemeteries are often overcrowded, there is no burial ground for months or even years – as in the case of [seven castaways from the tragedy of November 23, 2019](#), whose coffins are still deposited in the morgue of the Agrigento cemetery.

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