



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 5/2022
Palermo, 31.03.2022



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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

[Mimmo Lucano](#), already under house arrest since 2018, was sentenced to 13 years and two months in prison for alleged fraud, embezzlement and aiding and abetting illegal immigration last September. In addition, he must pay a fine of more than 500,000 euros. As mentioned in the [last issue](#) of Scirocco, Lucano and his integration project in Riace have always been a thorn in the eye of the authorities. [Civil groups](#) are still fighting to have the bogus charges against Lucano dropped. "There is much more at stake in this case than my own freedom. Solidarity itself is on trial. No crime was committed in our town of Riace. The crimes are those of our government in Rome, which denies the most basic rights to refugees living here and instead lets them drown on the Mediterranean," [stresses the former mayor](#). He wants to file an appeal to the court.

Meanwhile, Italian efforts continue to focus on interrupting migratory movements on the African continent already far before the borders of the Mediterranean. A [new project](#) by Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS) and Centro di Salute Globale (CSG) in Tuscany aims to advance health engagement and support for women in Sudan. The project is funded by the EU and implemented jointly with the Sudanese

Ministry of Health. Sudan, where three main migration routes from North, East and Central Africa intersect, will thus be supported in its ability to host more refugees on a permanent basis. Once again, the European Union proves that it gives more importance to its externalization efforts in the migration sector than to fundamental human rights. "Border guards are taking brutal action against refugees and migrants. On paper there are measures for protection of refugees and for combating the causes of people fleeing their countries, but in practice they are not carried out. On the contrary, the root causes of forced migration are only exacerbated by lending further legitimacy to regimes responsible for human rights violations, violence and persecution by involving them in border security arrangements", [Pro Asyl](#) stated already back in 2016.



Statue in Venticari in memory of the dead at sea. Photo by Giulio Tanzini.

An international arrest warrant has been in place for former Sudanese President Omar al Bashir since 2009. Amnesty International has documented around 30 government poison gas attacks on civilians in 2016 alone. Sudan has not been governed by a working government since the [revolution in 2019 and the renewed military coup last October](#). Italian efforts to ease the situation for refugees, especially women refugees, in the country are welcome. Additionally, the EU

recently placed a [special focus](#) on the political crisis in Sudan. Nevertheless, the fact that the project aims to prevent refugees from fleeing further is to be strongly condemned.

The Italian State Police, together with the International Relations Service of the Office for Coordination and Planning of Police Forces, organized the [first digital round table](#) with the Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Interior on March 18. It resulted in an intensified cooperation between the two governments, especially regarding human trafficking, terrorism and drug trafficking. Previous [Italian-Tunisian cooperation](#) was mainly limited to the expansion of the Tunisian border and coast guard and the repatriation of Tunisian citizens fleeing to Italy.

As we reported [here](#), a large proportion of arriving migrants in Italy continue to be accommodated in the CAS centers (Centro di accoglienza straordinaria – Extraordinary Reception Centers) of the prefectures. A new overview by [openpolis](#) shows the tragic proportions of the system: around two-thirds of all arrivals do not find a place in the Reception and Integration System (SAI) – a figure that has hardly changed since 2017. The provision of new reception capacity continues to mainly involve CAS placements. The predominant placement in such emergency reception centers proves once again the unwillingness of the Italian state to integrate refugees in an encompassing way. For this, the first step would be a place in the regular SAI reception system, which is designed for sustainable and spread-out integration. Moreover, only 5,000 of the [13,000 CAS places](#) promised for Ukrainian refugees have been made available so far.

Since 2011, several associations have been conducting a monitoring project on migration in Sicily together. This project is

supported by the [Evangelical Church in the Rhineland](#) and carried out in cooperation with [borderline-europe](#), [Menschenrechte ohne Grenzen e.V.](#) The gathered information is published on the associations websites and used for advocacy at the local and national level. The [annual report for the year 2021](#) has recently been published.



Transborder-Camp Ventimiglia (2021).

Situation of refugees in Italy

We continually report about the humanitarian situation at the border between Italy and France. In Ventimiglia, the situation of migrants is continuously deteriorating. Entrepreneurs and merchants of the city, who witness the unresolved situation of reception above all in a continuous decline of customers, now demand that migrants in transit must receive better assistance as their [latest appeal to the city government](#) says. In this regard, the anti-fascist association ANPI demands the creation of an [inclusive reception center](#) which could create a place of safety and hospitality in the border city.

For some time now, at least [100 refugees have been protesting in front of the UNHCR building](#) in Tunisia. Vulnerable groups, women, children and senior citizens, have also been [forced to leave their previous accommodation](#). Many have had their

financial support from the UNHCR partially or completely cut off. The homeless asylum seekers, who asked the UNHCR to include them in a resettlement program months ago, are increasingly threatened by parts of the Tunisian population and thus live in fear. As they currently have no prospect of resettlement and their situation in Tunisia is becoming increasingly precarious, many feel forced to return to Libya prior to escaping to Europe on their own. In a [statement](#), the UNHCR in Tunisia rejects its responsibility for the protests and emphasizes that the security situation in Tunisia is supposedly positive for refugees. Because fundamental and human rights are respected, resettlement is currently not necessary, according to the UNHCR.

Meanwhile, [arrivals on Lampedusa from Tunisia by boat](#) are increasing. Compared to the previous year, about a third more people from Tunisia arrived in Lampedusa in 2021. The [high number of women and children](#) arriving is also noteworthy. The number of pullbacks by the Tunisian Coast Guard doubled to 25,657 compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, the number of underage arrivals quadrupled compared to 2017. [2,076 of the 2,731 minors](#) from Tunisia arrived unaccompanied in 2021.



Ponte Galeria deportation detention center in Rome.
Photo by LasciateCIEntrare.

The [latest monitoring report](#) by Borderline Sicilia shows that migrants of Tunisian origin are exposed to massive structural racism in Italy. They are systematically transferred to deportation detention upon arrival and expelled in two to three charter flights per week. As of January 2021, Tunisian nationals accounted for 80.5% of all foreign nationals in detention pending deportation.

In this context, the unexplained death of [Wissem Abdel Latif](#), who was transferred from the detention center for deportees in Ponte Galeria to the psychiatric ward of the Ostia Hospital and further to the San Camillo Psychiatric Hospital in Rome on November 23, 2021, caused a particular stir. The young Tunisian, who was presumably in a psychological state of emergency, was fixed and sedated without his consent for more than five days before he died on November 28 without any further examination or medical intervention, "parked" in the corridor of the hospital.

The situation of foreign day laborers in Italy remains [precarious](#). Often employed illegally, their working conditions are characterized by insecurity, irregularity, and exploitation. Wages and pensions are significantly lower than those of local workers. Work is characterized by seasonality and short-term employment, and conditions are mostly inhumane. About one third of the work in the agricultural sector, for example, is done by foreign seasonal workers. Two thirds of them work less than 150 days a year. They are mostly housed in temporary shelters and improvised camps made of tents. Dangerous incidents occur time and again.

In the last issue of Scirocco we reported on a [fire in Campobello](#). Now, another camp in San Ferdinando (Reggio Calabria) attracted attention. After the tents were already destroyed by fire in 2019, there was a fatal

car accident involving a seasonal worker last December. The workers then went on [strike](#) to protest for better wages and more humane living and working conditions. However, it is rather encouraging that some of the seasonal workers have been able to move to the Abruzzo region for a [legal and permanent contract](#).



Burned down camp in Campobello 2022. Photo by Borderline Sicilia.

The [ius scholae bill](#) is being discussed very controversially in the Italian parliament. While the amendment, which was explained in more detail in the [last issue](#), is an absolute priority for the Democratic Party, the right-wing populist Lega has submitted nearly 500 amendments and made clear that they do not want the law. In the coming days, all political groups will meet for mediation and a possible agreement.

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

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