



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 6/2022
Palermo, 14.04.2022



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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

How European states act towards Ukrainian refugees does not only show what legal and financial means the EU potentially has at its disposal in regard to the reception of migrants and refugees, but at the same time perpetuates the racism of the current migration and border regime. **The doors of the EU are open - but only to those with the "right" passport.** A recent investigation by [The Independent](#), [Lighthouse Reports](#), [Radio France](#) and other media outlets found that many African refugees who had been temporarily living in the Ukraine and are now forced to flee again, were locked up in detention centers for weeks after crossing the Ukrainian-Polish border, while Ukrainian citizens were offered direct and unbureaucratic assistance. The mayor of Lampedusa, [Salvatore \(Totò\) Martello](#), has publicly criticized this practice. The **racism of reception** has always existed. EU countries wanted to take in refugees from the North but not those from the South, Martello commented, "perhaps because they are more like us, closer, less exploited." He is also annoyed by the little help Lampedusa has received over the years, which is in stark contrast to the great help given to Ukrainian refugees. We have already reported on the unequal treatment of refugees coming to the

European Union in [previous issues of Scirocco](#).



Demonstration against the joint agreement between Italy and Libya in Palermo (2021).

The UN Fact Finding Mission, an independent Commission of Inquiry on Libya published a [new report](#) on the present situation in Libya. According to the UN-investigators, the serious human rights violations, and culture of impunity prevailing in parts of Libya, as well as the lack of integrity of electoral processes, would block Libya's transition to greater peace, democracy, and the rule of law. There is new evidence that **human rights violations against refugee detainees in Libyan prisons are widespread and systematic**, and that the situation of civil society organizations, activists and human rights defenders has deteriorated massively. As already mentioned in their [last report](#), the UN investigators identified numerous violations of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers that may constitute **crimes against humanity**. Since then, many incidents of murder, torture, inhumane acts, sexual violence, persecution, and enslavement have been documented. In addition, attempts are being made to verify **reports of mass graves** containing the bodies of migrants from the desert city of Bani Walid – a center of human trafficking in Libya. This follows a [recently published](#)

[report](#) documenting incidents of rape, murder and torture.

For the period between 2018 and 2020, there is a general decrease in admissions to reception centers in Italy, especially in rural regions and inland areas with little infrastructure. This leads to a **concentration of admissions in (large) urban centers**, so-called "pole regions," as can be seen in a [statistical overview illustrated by openpolis](#). In Italy, municipalities are classified according to the presence or accessibility of [basic structural services](#) such as schools, access to health care and to public transport, among others. However, as far as the **social integration** of refugees and migrants is concerned, peripheral regions are often more open-minded and willing to help due to the urban anonymity. According to [openpolis](#), reception in rural or peripheral regions is a model that, if well organized, can therefore offer advantages for the integration of refugees and migrants.



Former detention center for deportees in Trapani.

CPR (Centri per il rimpatrio) (Detention for Deportation) has cost almost 45 million euros in the last three years. As reported by the daily newspaper [Domani](#), only 50% of the planned repatriations have been carried out in recent years. **CPR are so-called "non-places"** – places without history, individuality, and rights for non-European migrants. Persons without residence permits are usually accommodated in CPR under

inhumane conditions and sometimes must wait for months for their deportation.

In a case of **racist hate speech on Facebook**, a [37-year-old man](#) has been acquitted because the facts of "propaganda of ideas based on superiority or racial hatred" cannot be applied for private audio messages, according to Italian prosecutors. [Borderline Sicilia, together with other organizations](#), already drew attention to so-called hate speech on the Internet 10 years ago, but the legal persecution of hate and racism on the net is still not institutionalized and therefore, often protects the perpetrators.

On April, 8, further hearing in the **court case against former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini** took place in the [bunker room of the Ucciardone prison](#) in Palermo. Salvini is charged with deprivation of liberty and abuse of office for unlawfully refusing refugees and migrants from the civilian rescue ship Open Arms to land in Lampedusa. In this trial, it is questioned once more [whether the rescued persons were previously in distress at sea](#). The fact that overcrowded and unseaworthy boats on the open sea are increasingly being denied distress (as we previously reported [here](#) and [here](#) in German) is highly concerning and should be closely monitored. The next hearing is expected to take place in May.

Situation of refugees in Italy

In a report on the ["Situation of Human Rights in the World 2021-22"](#), Amnesty International classifies Italy as a place of missed opportunities. Italy is particularly criticized regarding the situation of refugees because **legal channels of protection for refugees and migrants are still ignored**, while the so-called Libyan coast guard, with the help of Italian funds, carries out thousands of illegal

repatriations and exposes people to exclusion, torture, and sexual violence. In Italy itself, return centers, quarantine ships, poor health care for refugees and migrants, and long court cases against civilian sea rescue organizations as well as the situation for human rights defenders are worrying.



Quarantine vessel off Palermo (2021).

According to Amnesty International, people who are particularly vulnerable in Italy are [migrants, women, members of the LGBTQ community and people deprived of their liberty](#). Moreover, the **abolition of the so-called Zen Law**, which would have protected the LGBTQ community from hate crimes, was one of the biggest missed opportunities for the human rights situation in Italy.

At the end of March, the Commissariat for Public Security and Crime Prevention [has extensively checked IDs in bustling parts of the border town of Ventimiglia](#). As a result, at least two people were reported to the judicial authorities for non-compliance with immigration laws and another twelve non-EU citizens were deported from Italy for having an invalid residence permit.

After the horrible death of 15-year-old Afghan Ullah Rezwan Sheyzad who was electrocuted on the roof of a regional train while trying to cross the border to France on March, 2 (we reported [here](#)), another **two people have been killed while trying to cross the Italian-French border**. They tried to cross the [A10 highway between Genoa](#)

[and Ventimiglia](#) on foot and were hit by a truck. A third person was seriously injured. The mayor of Ventimiglia, [Gaetano Scullino](#), expressed his sense of sympathy for the hopeless situation of the killed migrants and called for similar support for all refugees as that for people from Ukraine. In response to the **dozens of deaths caused by the current EU border regime**, civil protests continue to occur at the Italian-French border (we reported [here](#)).

Fearing an increase in arrivals of refugees during the summer months, Gaetano Scullino proposed the construction of a center for refugees near the river Sorba at the border crossing Ponte San Luigi. This way on, he said, he wants to relieve the city of Ventimiglia. However, according to the Secretary of State for Defense, [Giorgio Mulè](#), this will not happen. Instead, it is likely that a center previously established for around 90 people, will be reopened in **Parco Roja**.



European border fence. Photo by Phil Botha (2020).

[Melting Pot, in collaboration with the network Welcome to Europe](#), has published a free survival manual for unaccompanied foreign minors (and their guardians) to help minors arriving in Italy become aware of their rights and understand their way into the Italian society. The handbook is available in six languages and can be downloaded or ordered [here](#).

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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