



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 9/2022
Palermo, 27.05.2022



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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

The [Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights \(Ftdes\)](#) calls for the dignified burial of Tunisian migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. After it became known that the bodies of drowned migrants are piling up in the hospital of Sfax, Ftdes appealed to the respective authorities to take all necessary medical and legal measures for the **identification and dignified burial of the drowned bodies** among their families. The identification and humane burial of drowned people have already been discussed for some time in coastal states and beyond (there were also events at the [Sabir Festival](#) in May, in which borderline-europe participated). In addition, the Tunisian Forum calls for a **proactive sea rescue** along the Tunisian coasts, local emergency plans and a permanent communication channel for relatives of missing persons. Since the beginning of the year, Ftdes has already counted 276 victims and missing persons off the Tunisian coast, compared to 24 victims in the same period last year.

The **preliminary hearing** against 21 defendants, among them four members of the [crew of the civil rescue ship Luventa](#) has begun on May 21 at the court of Trapani. Among other things, they are accused of aiding and abetting irregular entry. The

preliminary hearing will determine whether the case will go to trial or not. The trial is accompanied by a [great wave of international solidarity](#) as the investigating authorities used extremely invasive and illegal investigation methods, which led to the wiretapping of dozens of Italian and foreign journalists, lawyers and even clergymen. [Sascha Girke](#), one of the crew member of the Luventa, was involved also in other rescue missions since the confiscation of the Luventa ship. He emphasizes the **double standards of European migration policy** in regard of the EU's willingness to support Ukrainian refugees while criminalizing flight and support structures in other cases such as the Mediterranean. Together, the defendants demand that all people fleeing should be allowed to move freely solidarity should neither be criminalized nor prosecuted.



Demonstration in front of the court in Trapani on May 21, 2022.

The trial against the Luventa crew is the most extensive trial against members of civilian sea rescue organizations in the Mediterranean so far. Together with Arci Porco Rosso, borderline-europe organized a demonstration in front of the court in Trapani on May 21, the start of the hearings, which was attended by around 100 supporters from all over Europe. Due to various formal errors to be resolved in June, the hearing has been postponed to July, 5. At

the request of the prosecutor, the preliminary hearing will be held in camera and thus without international trial observers, which is already [strongly criticized](#) by the current trial observers. More information on the Luventa case can be found [here](#) on our website.

There is still no lasting solution to the **humanitarian emergency in the village of Cassibile**. The existing places are not enough to accommodate all seasonal workers so that some people are forced to live in inhumane conditions in outdoor tent camps. Therefore, it is currently discussed whether the closed hostel Belvedere should be used to further create sleeping places. In regard to this emergency situation, the [movement Lealtà e Condivisione \(L&C\)](#) calls for a permanent round table in the Prefecture of Syracuse to deal with the potato harvest and the related arrival of seasonal workers. Moreover, the movement demands a working group to organize the expansion of the hostel and the creation of similar reception facilities in Lentini and Pachino. We have already reported on the humanitarian problems in Cassibile in [previous issues](#) of Scirocco.

In the Basilicata region too, there are **major structural problems in the agricultural sector** including seasonal work. There are still no legal admission procedures for seasonal workers, which could prevent the exploitation of workers – at least 50% of whom come from abroad. The [project Su.pr.Eme. Italy](#) aims to overcome the plight of the agricultural sector in the regions of Puglia, Calabria, Sicily, Campania, and Basilicata with a focus on the **exploitation phenomenon "caporalato"**.

In the **trial of former Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini** (we previously reported [here](#) and [here](#)), the defense is currently trying to [turn the roles of the](#)

[judicial process on their head](#) and shift responsibility to the members of the Open Arms. Instead of pursuing the question of whether Salvini's refusal to disembark the people on the civilian rescue ship constituted a breach of the law, [lawyer Giulia Bongiorno](#), a Lega senator and minister in the first Conte government as well as Salvini's defense attorney, is now trying to question the legality and necessity of sea rescue by the NGO Open Arms in general. We report on the court case [here](#).



Quarantine ship in port (2021).

Although **the state of emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy ended** on March 31, quarantine ships for refugees will continue to operate until [the end of May](#) (at least). With the expiry of the health emergency state, the legal justification for the existence of floating quarantine hotspots unlawfully depriving refugees of personal liberty, has ended as well. Migrants are not subject to the same quarantine rules as Italians and other foreigners – a fact which we strongly condemn. We demand that the **unlawful operation of all quarantine ships** will be stopped immediately (we already reported [here](#)).

Situation of refugees in Italy

The arrivals in the regions of Calabria and Puglia through the **Ionian Route** continue to increase. Therefore, the [prefects and mayors](#)

of the respective administrations have met to prepare the upcoming weeks together, to find places of reception and to establish a network between mayors.



Neglected fishing boat on the beach (2021)

With the support of the Italian Embassy and several Italian associations, the first **safehouse for migrants and refugees** could be opened along the Bosnian-Croatian border (the so-called Balkan route) in the town of [Kakany in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). The safehouse is part of an alternative reception and support model for the approximately 80,000 people fighting their way to the European Union along this route. The new safehouse is located between Velika-Kladusa and Trieste, where a particularly large number of people are forced back into Croatia and eventually into Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the safehouse is also one of the many externalization efforts by Italian authorities, who repeatedly finance projects on central flight routes to prevent people from fleeing to Europe even before they reach the borders of the Schengen area.

In the [port of Porto Empedocle](#), there has also been some constructing work: with the help of a new tent and container structure, the coordination of landings and arrivals of migrants and refugees, including those from ships, will be better organized. The newly opened area corresponds to a **transit area**

with medical, legal, and social facilities and can be used as a temporary shelter for about 30 people if necessary. In the past, there has already been a tent structure where hundreds of people were held for hours in a confined space. It remains to be seen whether the new structure will be better organized.

Last week, there was another fire in the [settlement of Borgo Mezzanone](#) in which – fortunately – no one was injured. Nevertheless, **the flames destroyed about 20 sporadically equipped shelters** in which migrants are permanently housed while working the land. Four people have already lost their lives in previous fires.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the situation of non-Ukrainian refugees and migrants arriving in Italy has deteriorated significantly. They are sidelined by the national reception system and increasingly suffer from discrimination and racism. According to witnesses, the management of the reception centers was put under pressure by the prefectures to find reception places for Ukrainian refugees – **at the expense of other groups of people**. In addition, police headquarters were overburdened and prioritize Ukrainian nationals. According to [Valeria Capezio of the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration \(ASGI\)](#), the political prioritization of refugees from Ukraine is very problematic, and in some cases one can even speak of "first class" or "second class" refugees within the Italian reception system.

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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