



**Scirocco**  
**borderline-europe, Sicily –**  
**Part 12/2022**  
**Palermo, 13.07.2022**



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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**

At the beginning of 2022, Italian port authorities [removed](#) all available data on search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean Sea between 2016 and 2021 from their website. This data previously allowed conclusions to be drawn about so-called "[pushbacks](#)" by and with the support of the Italian Coast Guard and are therefore of considerable importance. However, the data was archived and republished by journalists from [Altreconomia](#) before it was deleted completely.

In an [annual report](#) of the Italian Coast Guard published on June 27, 2022 – the first in six years – the Coast Guard distinguishes between "rescued people" and "rescued migrants". This classification does not only contradict international maritime law, but visibly dehumanizes refugees. Although the Italian involvement with Frontex is briefly discussed, the cooperation with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard is not even mentioned. Furthermore, there are huge inconsistencies in the data on search and rescue operations carried out by the Italian Coast Guard in 2021. To name one example, the General Command of the Port Authorities claims in their annual report to have coordinated 300 SAR-operations "related to migratory flows" during which 22,233 "migrants" were

rescued. However, these figures differ greatly from [previously published figures](#) that speak of 211 SAR missions and 14,346 rescued people. We already reported about opaque statistics and discrepancies in publications on arrivals of the Italian Ministry of the Interior and the importance of these figures in the [March issue](#) of our Central Med Info.



The Italian Coast Guard patrol boat CP302 ©[Gaetano56](#)

On World Refugee Day on June 20, asylum seekers and refugees in Tunisia issued a [press release](#) repeatedly calling for their evacuation from Tunisia to a safe country. The living conditions in Tunisia are inhumane and the lives of many refugees are marked by discrimination, exploitation, and homelessness. Moreover, in Tunisia, a refugee status does not give people access to education, public health facilities, work or freedom of movement within the country. After months of protests in front of the UNHCR headquarters in Zarzis and Tunis (we reported [here](#)), the refugees' protests were violently dispersed by Tunisian security authorities on June 18 and the people were robbed of their belongings. While part of the protestors – apparently randomly selected by the UNHCR – is said to have been evacuated in the meantime, those who remained in Tunisia are still trying to make their demands to the UNHCR heard.

The [court case](#) in the case of Sea-Watch captain Carola Rackete against the former Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini is postponed. It is to be examined whether Salvini's immunity as a senator at that time protects him from prosecution for his defamatory statements via social media. In June and July 2019, Salvini [accused](#) Rackete of being a "lawless accomplice of smugglers", calling her a "potential murderer", "criminal" as well as "pirate". In her complaint, Carola Rackete accuses the Lega politician of defamation for having attacked her in a way that damaged her reputation.

At the moment, there are numerous [reports](#) of [cases](#) in which [Tunisian protection seekers](#) were brought to a [detention center \(CPR\)](#) on the Italian mainland right after their first arrival on Lampedusa. In some cases, people were directly deported from Rome to Tunisia. So far, Tunisian refugees have been taken to Sicily by boat where they received a notice to leave or were taken into custody in Trapani or Caltanissetta. To reduce the number of people in the [hotspot of Contrada Imbriacola](#) on Lampedusa, Italian authorities execute [deportations by charter flight](#) more frequently again. With a maximum of 350 places available on site, this once again resulted not only in large gaps in supply, but also in untenable conditions for the people accommodated (we reported already [here](#)). According to a document from the Italian Court of Auditors, Italy spent around [27.4 million euros](#) on deportations between 2018 and 2020, while the recognition rate for asylum seekers was between [34% and 40%](#).

On June 25, [people on the move](#) detained at the Caltanissetta Detention Center (CPR) [protested](#) against police violence as well as the failure to provide medical assistance. The protest was triggered by the lack of health care within the facility as well as the

mistreatment of a Tunisian man by Italian police officers and the blocking of rescue services by the same. During the protests, another person [fell from the roof](#) of the detention center and was seriously injured. Only after continued protests by his supporters, paramedics were granted access to the injured person who could subsequently be treated in a hospital. The protesters demanded a meeting with representatives of the Tunisian consulate to show the inhumane living conditions in the CPR in Caltanissetta.



Refugees protest on the roofs of the CPR Caltanissetta  
©[Lasciateci centrare](#)

A few days later, a delegation consisting of an Italian parliamentarian and a lawyer from the Italian lawyers' association ASGI visited the detention center. However, the [inhumane conditions](#) within the nationwide CPRs should have been known to them long ago. In the past, there have been repeated reports of suicide attempts, inedible food, contaminated drinking water, lack of medical care, hygiene problems and social isolation among detained migrants. The ongoing heat wave – that is currently affecting Sicily as well as many other parts of Italy – makes the situation even more difficult. The detention centers do not offer any possibility to escape the heat or to distraction in any way. In other parts of Italy, such as Gradisca d'Isonzo, Senator Paola Nugnes (Misto) inspected the local CPR and reported that six people were locked in cages and completely denied access to the outside world. The windows



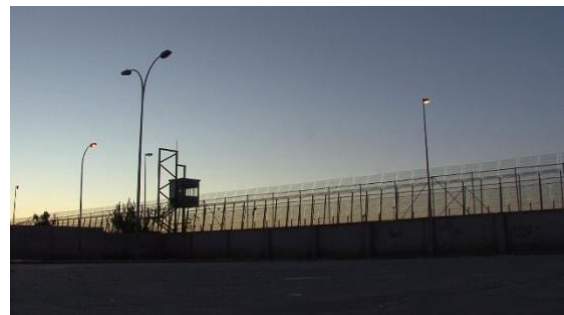
were covered with plexiglass panes creating unbearable heat inside the rooms. Furthermore, there was no medical staff, but only a single nurse for up to 150 people. As a reminder, CPRs are detention centers for people whose "crime" was to enter Italian territory in their search for a better, safer life. Still, among the detained there are people who have been living in Italy [for years](#), are married to Italian citizens and/or have children in Italy. Due to bilateral agreements, all of them are threatened with deportation to their home country if they cannot present the "right" documents. Despite several [calls for the closure](#) of detention centers, no changes seem to be in sight. Among other things, this is because CPRs are run by companies that have been outsourced to the private sector. Therefore, they are profit-oriented and will continue to put profits before people.

The Italian Ministry of the Interior has considered to open another hotspot. However, according to the responsible prefecture, there will be no such [hotspot in Portopalo](#) on Sicily but a so-called transit area for the execution of administrative tasks. It remains to be seen what this will ultimately mean.

### **Situation of refugees in Italy**

With an [angry appeal](#), Tunisian women of the [Association of Mothers of Disappeared Migrants](#) condemned the Italian and Spanish authorities for their violence against people on the move who are detained in Caltanissetta and at the Spanish-Moroccan border in Melilla: "We are shocked and angry about the images we have seen and the voices we have heard from Melilla and Sicily: This treatment of migrants is a form of torture. These are inhumane and immoral acts. What a shame for European countries who claim to be democratic and civilized

countries! Where are your 'human rights'?" In their appeal, the women demand respect for the international rights for refugees, the opening of the deadly (European) borders as well as an end to restrictions on movement by land and sea. Since 1993, more than [48,647 deaths](#) of people fleeing to Europe have been documented. This tragically high figure can be traced back to the European migration and border regime.



Border fence at the Spanish-Moroccan border in Melilla. Photo by [StephaneMGrueso](#).

Another fire occurred in a shelter for migrant farm workers in [Borgo Mezzanone](#), which did not injure anyone. In the camps around "Torre Antonacci" in Rignano Garganico (Foggia), a [35-year-old farm worker](#) died due to a similar fire outbreak. Unfortunately, this tragedy is not an isolated case. Due to a lack of infrastructure, temporary buildings and protective measures provided by the Italian state, fires break out again and again in makeshift shelters for agricultural workers.



Die Region Rignano Garganico ist u. a. geprägt von Agrarwirtschaft © [Giovanni Zagaria](#)

Although the number of arrivals in the Franco-Italian border town of Ventimiglia is not decreasing, the opening of an initial reception center (we reported [here](#)) continues to be delayed at the expense of people on the move. Due to the lack of accommodation, many refugees are now camping in front of the [Caritas base](#) in Ventimiglia hoping to receive food, medical, psychological or legal assistance as well as clothing donations. Various local volunteer organizations are also involved in providing food, while state authorities are once again failing to fulfill their obligation to support and care for people on the move. The number of persons arriving in the [Slovenian-Italian border region](#) is also increasing. Supporters of ICS (Italian Solidarity Consortium) and Caritas point out that the reception systems are heavily crowded, and some people are already forced to sleep in the open.

**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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