



**Scirocco**  
**borderline-europe, Sicily –**  
**Part 15/2022**  
**Palermo, 23.09.2022**



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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

The violence against refugees and migrants in Libyan camps is well known by now, but the video of [15-year-old Mazin](#) being **tortured in the Libyan detention center of Ain Zara** is very shocking. It is used by the local militia to [demand ransom](#). Mazin had participated in the months-long protests in front of the UNHCR office in Tripoli (we reported [here](#) and in the [following issues](#) of this newsletter) and fought for the rights of refugees together with hundreds of other people. For this protest, he was already arrested on [January 10, 2022](#), and taken to Ain Zara detention center. Shortly before the video appeared, Mazin disappeared without a trace.



Mazin participating in protests for the rights of refugees. © Refugees In Libya

Unfortunately, this story is **not an individual case for refugees** in Libya. Like the organization [Emergency](#), we denounce the **complicity of the European Union and the Italian state**, which for years have been supporting the Libyan authorities with [financial and logistical resources](#) and simultaneously have been ignoring these human rights crimes.

Moreover, during election campaigns and domestic political debates, right-wing and racist positions are usually strengthening in the EU and especially in Italy to such an extent that the unspeakable is once again becoming acceptable: In [Como \(Lombardy\)](#), the mayor agitates against migrants and made the **misanthropic and racist** proposal to relocate them to a remote desert-like area in Barbagia, Sardinia. At the same time, the political right stirs up hatred against migrants and refugees with [false information and racist accusations](#). Georgia Meloni, leader of the post-fascist party "[Fratelli d'Italia](#)", tries to prevent the arrival of migrants and refugees in Italy with a sea blockade (read more in our Central Med Info which is published in German [here](#)). Such a blockade was already tested in 1997 in the Adriatic Sea and [cost the lives of dozens of people](#). Not any less known for his right-wing polemics and agitation is former Italian Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini, who currently campaigns on the **back of marginalized people**, despite [several court cases against him](#). However, it is precisely the inhumane conditions and degradation in the reception centers, including the hotspot on Lampedusa, which he describes as ["unworthy of a civilized country"](#), that are primarily Salvini's responsibility. The "security decrees" ("decreti sicurezza") issued by him during his term as Minister of the Interior restructured large parts of the



Italian reception system. We published a report on the effects of the "security decrees" [here](#).

In Italy, it has, unfortunately, become the norm to arrest [young men](#) who had entered Italy as minors and convict them as [alleged smugglers \("scafisti"\)](#) (we report [here](#) and [here](#)). In a report by [L'Essenziale](#), we learn of **Saidu Bangura**, who fled Libya to Italy with a hundred other people and was imprisoned upon arrival for steering the boat. It is not acknowledged that by doing so he had saved all the people on board. Similar happened to **Joof Ousaineu** and dozens of other minors; how many people are affected is unknown so far. According to the lawyers who defended Bangura and Ousaineu in Palermo and Catania during the last years, **arresting so-called "scafisti" is part of a European strategy of migration defense**. But the increasing acquittals in Palermo give hope that the courts will start to judge in favor of the refugees and understand which actors are actually to blame: Libyan authorities, real human traffickers, and the deadly migration and border regime of the European Union.

In August, [38 people](#) were relocated from Italy to France as a result of the new **"EU mechanism of voluntary solidarity"**. Through this European agreement, up to 10,000 people will be redistributed within the European Union during the next months. [borderline-europe](#) reports about the problematic "relocation" transfer from Italy to Germany [here](#).

The [European Court of Justice \(ECJ\)](#) has ruled that the exclusion of a Senegalese man from the reception system on basis of a physical assault was not legal. The ECJ said in a statement that the deprivation of the right to admission for migrants always constitutes a **disproportionate sanction** that violates human dignity and thus, the exclusion is not possible nor fair.



European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. © Cédric Puisney

The EU border agency **FRONTEX**, which is **active in Italy and other European states, exploits its employees** and violates European standards for wages and working conditions. According to an [online petition](#) by interpreter [Moctar Mohammed](#), who has worked for various EU agencies, FRONTEX effectively pays wages below €2.50 per hour by employing temporary workers through third-party contractors – FRONTEX is the best-funded agency in the EU with a budget of €754 million, fair wages should be possible.

The Prefect of Reggio Calabria has announced interventions for [adequate housing solutions](#) to overcome the precarious and undignified conditions of reception for refugees. A budget of 10 million euros will now be used to renovate a former industrial complex and finance the **construction of an ecologically sustainable "village" to house seasonal workers**. So far, the so-called ghettos have been the talk of the town (we reported [here](#), for example), where migrants harvest vegetables and fruit but receive no humane accommodation. Let's hope that this project will bring progress for the first time.

For more information on living conditions in Italian first reception centers and hotspots, we recommend the new [report by ASGI](#) (Advocacy Association Studies on Immigration) on the **suspension of rights on the Mediterranean island of**

**Pantelleria.** As a geographical "gateway to the European Union", many people arrive on the small island and are confronted with [informal reception practices](#) that severely limit the rights of migrants.



The island of Pantelleria from above. © NASA/Scott Kelly

ASGI published another [report](#) about a **visit to the hotspot of Lampedusa** which we recommend as well. In recent years, ASGI has analyzed that the so-called hotspot centers are affected by significant and systematic violations of rights. In Lampedusa, as in other border areas, **detention, isolation, and restrictions on access to information and the right to defense** are practical means to carry out informal control and selection of arrivals. We have reported on the disastrous and inhumane conditions in the Contrada Imbriacola hotspot of Lampedusa in [previous issues of Scirocco](#).

### Situation of Refugees

A group of 25 migrants spent seven days and nights in front of a Questura (police station) in Italy before they received their first appointment to apply for asylum. Theoretically, the people concerned [would already have an immediate right to be admitted to a reception center](#), explains the president of the association Ronda della Carità, Alberto Sperotto, who assisted the refugees with meals, blankets, and the possibility to shower. Currently, many people live on the street due to large bureaucratic hurdles and long waiting times for asylum procedures and become, so to

speak, "invisible". Similar happens to a group of about [30 people](#) who have been living in the open – in the gardens of Porta San Marco in Siena – for months, waiting for their asylum procedures to be completed.

[Caritas](#) reported on a Tunisian family living in disastrous conditions in the shanty town of Crotona (Calabria). The family received a negative asylum decision with **the authorities simply ignoring the underage and thus particularly vulnerable children**, explains [Ramzi Labidi](#), head of Caritas' World and Migration Department. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case, but a recurring procedure of the authorities, who do not provide language mediators, and thus, among other things, important details about the asylum seekers are lost during the interviews. In the case of the Tunisian family, Caritas was able to provide legal support, housing, and other care structures – but not all people are lucky enough to be supported by private organizations. Jointly with the Swiss Refugee Council, borderline-europe has published a report on the impossibility of replacing state tasks with NGOs and church institutions, which can be found [here](#) (in German).

Refugees are continuously brought to psychiatric wards and treated with sedatives without really being helped. A tragic case is that of Wissem Abdel Latif (we reported [here](#)). Now, with a lot of effort from the [organization MEDU and the Italian Caritas](#), the 24-year-old Somali Z. could be freed from a **psychiatric hospital, where he was tied up and sedated**, and brought to an SAI center (Center for Reception and Integration, which followed SPRAR). There, he now receives psychotherapeutic and material support and is finally back in contact with people who are familiar to him.

Shortly after he was brought to the detention center for deportation (CPR) in Gradisca d'Isonzo (Gorizia), a [young asylum seeker from Pakistan](#) took his own life. He



had previously been housed in other facilities. The difficult living conditions in the CPRs and the violence on the part of the officials (we reported [here](#) and [here](#)), as well as the lack of freedom of movement, could have been concomitant reasons for the suicide of the young person.



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The [reception facilities](#) on the so-called "Balkan route" in northern Italy are now **fully occupied** and, due to the many landings on Lampedusa, **no transfer to other centers** is currently possible. The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (FVG) and the [city of Trieste](#) try to accommodate arriving people in a kind of "buffer facility" with sanitary facilities and emergency beds until they are distributed to other parts of Italy. However, this plan has not yet been implemented, [leaving around 250 people in Trieste to sleep on the streets](#) while they wait for their [application for international protection](#) to be formalized. These living conditions are untenable. The [Gradisca d'Isonzo](#) shelter, located nearby, is also overcrowded. From here, 300 people are to be transferred to other areas outside Friuli Venezia Giulia – if the transfer is not postponed. This is what happened at the [former Cavarzerani barracks in Udine](#), where more than 700 people recently had to sleep on 120 emergency beds because their transfer to other regions has been suspended for the time being.

The situation of refugees in the [Italian-French border region of Ventimiglia](#) is no less catastrophic: **the number of people**

**trying to reach France in search of a decent life is increasing, while the conditions they face are becoming more and more dramatic.** For example, the epidemiological analysis "[Mal di Frontiera](#)" by Silvia Mancini (Médecins Sans Frontières) shows that 23% of those who had tried to cross the border had been victims of violence by Italian or French (border) officials for at least one time. Furthermore, the hygienic conditions are [extremely precarious](#). There are neither sleeping places nor sufficient sanitary facilities and fleeing people regularly get lost in the [dark forests of the border area](#). It is also problematic that support and assistance for migrants passing through are provided exclusively by non-governmental organizations, diocesan institutions, and private associations, which [lack basic resources such as clothing and meals](#) due to their workload.

**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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