



**Scirocco**  
**borderline-europe, Sicily –**  
**Part 20/2022**  
**Palermo, 29.11.2022**



## Scirocco borderline-europe, Sicily - Part 21/2022

Palermo, 22.12.2022

Scirocco [ʃiˈrɒkko-Scirocco] is a southeasterly, hot strong wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean Sea to Sicily and Italy's north for often only a few hours. This newsflash has been published on an approximately bi-weekly basis since March 2021.

### Political and social situation

The court case against the two people held responsible for the "shipwreck of the children" of October 11, 2013 (see [here](#) and [here](#)) has ended with a verdict. [Roman judges Maria Concetta Giannitti and Chiara Bocola and the president of the Second Criminal Chamber, Anna Maria Pazienza](#) concluded that the Italian Navy and Coast Guard were guilty of **deliberate failure to rescue the ship** and that their decision not to intervene contributed to the heavy casualties: 268 dead, including sixty children who had left Libya the night before. The defendants, the ship's captain Leopoldo Manna and the frigate captain Luca Licciardi, escaped conviction due to the **statute of limitations**; survivors can now sue for damages. In a [joint statement](#), the lawyers of the families and victims recalled the importance of this ruling: "Our clients, who saw their relatives and in many cases their children drown and risked their lives during the five hours at sea in which they waited in vain for rescue, have always asked us to make sure that what happened won't happen again, and that is why they have also taken the agony of this long process. Today, we can hope that this decision will

remind everyone of the conventional and legal obligations incumbent on those who carry out and manage sea rescues. The **decision of the Roman Court concerns not only the past, but also the present and the future**: human lives at sea must always be saved, and no order or convenience can suppress this inescapable duty."

### Political tensions between France and Italy

The political tensions between France and Italy over the **landing of the civilian rescue ship Ocean Viking** (see also [here](#)) were also felt at the EuroMed summit. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was represented by [Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani](#), who interpreted the current disputes as "different opinions" between France and Italy and pointed out that the distribution issue of migrants and refugees can only be solved on a European level. In addition, a meeting between French President [Emmanuel Macron and Giorgia Meloni](#) is planned. According to the EU Home Affairs Council, a [political compromise](#) is currently being worked on regarding the responsibility to rescue in distress at sea and the solidarity of the distribution and reception of rescued persons. The fact that the EU faces major unresolved problems is also made clear by the **disappearance of the people from the rescue ship Ocean Viking**. The ship of the aid organization SOS Méditerranée had docked in the southern French port of Toulon at the end of November, and France, Germany and other EU states each agreed to take in a third of the arriving people. However, as previously mentioned (see [here](#)), 123 of the 230 people who arrived in France

were already rejected upon arrival. [However, until today only the whereabouts of 6 of the 234 people are known](#), leaving French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin in need of explanation.

### Italian migration policy

The Italian government's migration policy plans look bleak: For example, [Giorgia Meloni](#) wants to invest **42 million euros in the expansion of deportation centers** over the next three years. In addition, she does not consider a reform of the Dublin Agreement or the redistribution of refugees and migrants necessary, but calls for a [stop of departures and the blocking of sea departures](#) across the Mediterranean. Italian Foreign Minister [Antonio Tajani](#) announced significantly more **authorizations for the return** of migrants, which in practice correspond to deportations.

With the new government, the number of [neo-fascist threats and racially and politically motivated attacks against journalists and trade unions](#) has risen sharply. This affects both well-known journalists like Paolo Berizzi and Rula Jebreal, as well as smaller newspapers and organizations. Already last year, a group of neo-fascists attacked and destroyed the headquarters of one of Italy's largest trade unions after failing to reach the Prime Minister's official residence. This was a sign of the neo-fascist movement, as the attacks are not "only" online threats on social media, but a real, physical threat to reporters and trade unions, commented Paolo Berizzi. With the new right-wing government, right-wing extremists in Italy feel further emboldened, so that the

threats have once again increased significantly.

### EU policy

The European Commission has announced it has provided [1.2 billion euros](#) in financial support to Turkish authorities in 2022 to **strengthen border controls towards Europe**, as foreseen in the 2016 agreement between Ankara and the EU. Just recently, another 220 million euros were released to Turkey. The so-called **"EU-Turkey deal"** has been heavily criticized since the beginning. Turkey is accused of human rights violations and the EU of improperly rejecting asylum seekers and refugees - yet the European Council called for an extension of the agreement in [June 2021](#). In addition, a [report by Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#) reveals how **Frontex is complicit in human rights crimes committed by Libyan authorities** through aerial surveillance.

Together with North African partner countries, the EU has launched [two initiatives to cooperate on migration](#). The **'Team Europe' initiatives** now focus on the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean and Central Mediterranean migration routes. They represent a **further attempt at migration defense** on the part of the EU.

### Don Mattia case

The Italian prosecutor's office wants to archive the case of Don Mattia. The [chaplain of the Italian organization Mediterranea Saving Humans had received threats](#) linked to the Libyan mafia through his Twitter account. This shows that the attacks against those who work to rescue migrants and refugees from the sea or denounce human



trafficking in the Mediterranean are not taken seriously by the Italian authorities and, in the words of the investigating authorities, are not "profiles of criminal relevance". The action of these authorities **disregards the reality and the seriousness of the situation for priests, journalists and human rights defenders** who, according to journalistic research and parliamentary files, are threatened by a "spokesman for the Libyan mafia with links to the intelligence services of various countries" and exposes them to further danger.

### **Soumahoro case**

The Prefecture of Latina has [withdrawn the responsibility for 13 migration centers](#) from the cooperative of the mother-in-law of the Italian-Ivorian trade unionist, activist and politician Aboubakar Soumahoro (we reported [here](#)). Marie Therese Mukamitsindo has been on trial for weeks on charges of **serious fraud, false invoicing and misappropriation of public funds** in the management of these centers. In particular, she is accused of not paying salaries to her employees for months and keeping the centers in a condition far below the standards required by the state. **Soumahoro is not under investigation.** Nevertheless, the politician has now [resigned from the Alleanza Verdi Sinistra parliamentary group](#), saying he (had) committed "a frivolity" by not taking a greater interest in the problems of his mother-in-law's cooperatives. Moreover, he explained his views in a [video statement](#), adding that he was born on the street and had always been in the corner. His path to politics, he said, had not been an individual path, but a collective one, and this is the one he will follow again now.

### **Figures and statistics**

In 2022, Italy **received a below-average number of people** seeking international protection or asylum compared to other European countries. This is according to the [Migration Report of the Italian Bishops' Conference](#), which draws attention to the fact that in the period from January to October of this year alone, at least 1,800 people lost their lives on the Mediterranean Sea. With regard to the European Union's willingness to receive refugees, the report speaks of a **split**: while there has been and continues to be great solidarity with Ukrainian refugees throughout Europe, there is increasing discrimination and violation of human rights and international conventions against those seeking protection from other parts of the world - including minors arriving at the EU's borders. Moreover, in **2022, the number of people fleeing the world had exceeded the 100 million mark.**

According to the [Italian Ministry of the Interior](#), 98,179 people have landed on Italian shores since the beginning of this year, of which around 12,100 are unaccompanied minors (12.3%). After a decrease in the covid year 2020, when few people fled, the number of people fleeing increased again in 2021 and 2022. At the same time, the [number of outstanding asylum decisions has increased by 50%](#). Long waiting times of at least four weeks, great difficulties in accessing applications at police stations, and inadmissible applications prevent many people **from accessing international protection status**, in serious violation of European and national rules on refugee status recognition. Italian Legislative Decree No.

25 of 2008 emphasizes the importance of timely acceptance of the expression of will to apply for international protection and prescribes precise deadlines for this purpose. Similarly, Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council sets binding procedures and deadlines for the registration of applications for international protection - both of which are frequently disregarded in reality, to the detriment of people seeking protection.

### **Financial support to Lampedusa**

The news of a government package of [financial support to the municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa](#) to cover the costs incurred in housing and managing refugees and migrants is encouraging.

### **Exploitation of migrant workers (Caporalato)**

In Italy, about **230,000 migrant workers are working without employment contracts** and under inhumane conditions. The [VI report "Agromafie e caporalato" of the Observatory Placido Rizzotto of the Confederation of Italian Trade Unions \(CGIL\)](#) shows that the exploitation of migrant agricultural and seasonal workers does not show great regional differences between the north and the south of Italy, provided that the illegalized workers enter the criminal system of "caporalato". The report includes testimonies from victims who tell their stories, and draws attention to the **structural exploitation and environmental violations of agri-food chains**.

## **Situation of Refugees**

### **Humanitarian corridor**

Thanks to a **humanitarian flight corridor**, [114 refugees from Libya](#) were able to enter Rome at the end of November. The people concerned come from Syria, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are received by the National Reception System as well as by the Parish of Sant'Edigio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches of Italy and the Tavola Valdese. This arrival completes a protocol for refugees and asylum seekers through which a total of 500 people have entered Italy from Libyan camps.

Another humanitarian escape corridor enabled the **evacuation of 152 Afghans** who have been waiting for their promised entry to Italy and other European countries since the end of last year. This humanitarian corridor was the responsibility of the Italian State and the Italian Embassy in Islamabad (Pakistan). [Libero Ciuffreda, member of the Council of the Federation of Evangelical Churches](#) in Italy, commented emotionally on the entry by plane: "I saw Lampedusa, I saw dead children, I saw people who arrived exhausted. You came with your families, your suitcases and your affection. So it is possible. (...) It is possible to have a

planned and coordinated welcome, a welcome where people look each other in the eye, shake hands and walk together. A good journey for all of us".

Unfortunately, humanitarian corridors of this kind are the absolute exception. Safe entry must be a fundamental right for all those seeking protection.

### **Accommodation of refugees**

Only 37.7% of applications for a residence permit in Italy were approved in the period from May 2020 to the end of October. This data was provided by the [Ero straniero campaign](#), which strongly criticizes the slow administrative machinery of the Ministry of Interior and blames this **low rate for the miserable living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers** in Italy. Extremely long waiting times, permanently understaffed, underutilized and unprepared offices force refugees and migrants into precarious working and living conditions. This is also the content of a **class action lawsuit against the Prefecture of Rome**, which was filed with the Regional Administrative Court of Lazio and whose first hearing is scheduled for January 31.

### **Black Book of Pushbacks 2022**

The ["Black Book of Pushbacks"](#) by the research collective Lighthouse Reports, published in collaboration with several European newspapers, has **well documented the inhumane conditions for migrants in Italy and Europe**.

According to the report, there are several so-called ["black sites" \(secret detention centers\)](#) in Bulgaria, Croatia and Hungary where refugees and migrants are held until their deportation and denied the right to asylum. During their detention, they have no access to toilets, running water, food and drink and are physically abused.

The book contains numerous testimonies of more than 25,000 people on the run, which clearly show the brutality of the European migration and border regime.

### **Italy-Austria-Slovenia border triangle (Balkan route)**

#### **Movements on the Balkan route increased by around 204% last year.**

This is true both in the Tarvisio area on the Italian border with Carinthia and at the Brenner Pass on the border with Tyrol. According to a directive [signed by the Ministry of the Interior](#) and sent to the Prefects of Gorizia, Trieste and Udine, as well as to the Regulatory Commissioner of the Province of Bolzano, border controls with Austria and Slovenia are therefore to be strengthened in the future. This is tragic insofar as there have recently been **serious illegalities** in the readmission of refugees and migrants on the Balkan route.

These have now also been established by the [court of Rome](#). Non-profit organizations and migrant support structures have long complained about the **inhumane and degrading**

**treatment of those in need of protection and the implementation of collective expulsions** - which are prohibited under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Geneva Refugee Convention (GRC) (see [here](#)). Nevertheless, the **bilateral agreement on the readmission of refugees and migrants** between Italy and Slovenia has been back in force since November 28. This was reported by the [Italian Secretary of the Interior, Emanuele Prisco](#), during a visit to Trieste. This decision is in line with the migration policy of the new Italian government, which does not hold back its **anti-migration and discriminatory plans** (see the [last issues](#) of Scirocco).

### Northern Italy

In Trieste, numerous refugees and migrants are still waiting for shelter. Without a roof over their heads, they have to **camp in front of the train station this winter and their health situation is worsening every day** due to falling temperatures. A group of citizens, who had already signed an open letter to the mayor on this issue last October, therefore pushed again for the [provision of a new dormitory for over 300 people](#) waiting for shelter and to accommodate the 100 new arrivals per day, about half of whom want to stay in Italy. The doctor Duccio Peratoner confirms the urgency of the humanitarian emergency: the young people come to the ambulances, to the

municipalities and to the day center in Via Udine and practically all of them have **fever, many have pneumonia and infestations like scabies**. The mayor, he said, is responsible for the health of the city and must urgently provide accommodation for the arriving people.

**Find more information on the situation in Italy and previous issues of the Scirocco under "Projects" on our homepage.**

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