



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 19/2022
Palermo, 22.11.2022



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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 **defamation and criminalisation of NGOs in the field of migration** by the political right is on the rise again - but this time right-wing and fascist politicians can rely on the [immunity of their office](#). The thesis that there is a pact between NGOs and traffickers, which has already been proven to be wrong, is once again being used to slander civilian sea rescue and refugees. The **fascist government** of President Giorgia Meloni has already campaigned with a restrictive migration policy and is now trying to implement it. The racist approach against migrants is becoming more and more violent, as our sister organisation Borderline Sicilia: Sicily has become the geopolitical hub of Italy's new militarised security policy through isolation detention, flash repatriations and rejections at sea.

Criminalisation of sea rescue

The [civilian rescue organisation SOS Humanity](#) is currently being threatened

with a fine of 50,000€ if it does not leave the port of Catania in Sicily immediately. The rescue ship had rescued 179 people from distress at sea, of whom only 144 were initially allowed to disembark. The situation is similar for the rescue ship Geo Barents, where 215 of the 572 people rescued were initially not allowed to land. "The decree of the Italian Minister of the Interior is undoubtedly illegal. Rejecting refugees at the Italian border violates the Geneva Refugee Convention as well as international law," says [Mirka Schäfer of SOS Humanity](#). The strategy of the new Italian government, which no longer wants to accept migrants and refugees rescued from the Mediterranean and sees the flag states of the ships responsible, is sharply criticised within Italy and abroad: "At this moment, a selective disembarkation is taking place in the port of Catania. Shipwrecked people, already exhausted by cold, fatigue, trauma and torture, are considered objects according to the will of the government (...). A disgrace!" commented the Italian Left-Green List MP [Aboubakar Soumahoro](#) on Twitter.

Iuventa Trial

The trial against four crew members of the Iuventa [continues to be](#) postponed. The preliminary hearing for "aiding and abetting the unauthorised entry" of asylum seekers in 2016 and 2017 is now scheduled to continue on **3 December**. If

convicted, the sea rescuers face up to 20 years in prison (we reported [here](#) and [here](#)).

Memorial Service on Lampedusa

A [memorial service for the eight dead](#), mostly children, of a shipwreck last October was held in the mortuary of the Cala Pisana cemetery on Lampedusa on 2 November. The deceased included a few weeks old twins whose parents were taking them to Italy for care and treatment, and a boy and a girl aged 10 months and one year respectively who died from burns. A [group of children from Lampedusa](#) read the story of the golden fish in front of the closed door of the mortuary and prayed for the four deceased children. **Permits for the transfer** of three of the eight bodies arrived a few days ago. Another [96 people](#) from the affected crossings were rescued by the Italian coast guard.

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The political impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is felt everywhere, but the living and working conditions of migrants are particularly affected: at the [16th Congress of the Italian Society for Migration Medicine](#) ("Società Italiana di Medicina delle Migrazioni"), it was reported that migrant workers had great difficulties in accessing public health services and were more often employed in undeclared work.

The latter are generally dangerous, difficult and dirty (= "3D"). In addition, unemployment among foreign workers has risen from 4.84% before the pandemic to 20.97% at present, which not only results in a general impoverishment, but also further worsens the conditions of precarious work and wage relationships.

The "[Dossier on Immigration](#)" of the Idos research institute confirms these alarming developments also in the Tuscany region: The social situation of foreign citizens and their families has deteriorated significantly in recent years. Among workers, the unemployment rate for this group is more than twice as high as for Italian citizens, job insecurity is widespread, and migrant workers are found especially in jobs that have little protection and are most at risk of exploitation. The Diocesan Caritas of Pisa also reports a significant increase in requests for assistance from foreign families.

Study on the reception of refugees and migrants in Italy

A [report by the Italian Ministry of the Interior](#) shows that, contrary to the statements of Italian politicians, **Italy takes in fewer refugees than other EU member states**: Germany, for example, takes in six times as many refugees as Italy in relation to its population, while Norway takes in three and a half times as many. Between 2019 and 2021, only

about **6.5% of the asylum applications filed in the EU** concern Italy. A change to the Dublin Agreement, which obliges people to apply for asylum in the country of arrival, would be necessary to distribute refugees among EU member states, but even Italian President Giorgio Napolitano said in Brussels that this was no longer Italy's priority. The goal is now "to defend the external borders". In recent years, Italy was one of the five European coastal states that had demanded a change in the Dublin Regulation in order to relieve the Italian reception system. The Dublin system as such is based on a restriction of the freedom of movement of asylum seekers and is as such an attempt to stop and control migration already at the European external borders. Despite the justified criticism, populist and right-wing ideologies also repeatedly use the massive flaws of this system for their own purposes and work them into the narrative of a "system overload" caused by migration, which, however, must be considered a result of the lack of solidarity-based and orderly solutions and not as a direct result of the arrival of protection seekers.

Situation of Refugees

After a visit to the improvised seasonal workers' shelters at Campobello and Castelvetro, [Italian Senator Davide Faraone](#) of Azione-Italia Viva expressed disbelief: "What is happening in the improvised camps at Campobello di

Mazara and Castelvetro is beyond human dignity and respect for life". He warned that humanitarian problems could not be solved if they were ignored and therefore arranged a meeting with the Prefect of Trapani to address the situation of unauthorised camps and disastrous accommodation structures.

In [Basilicata](#), too, there is a sharp debate about putting an end to yet another **emergency situation**: Workers who move all over Italy in search of employment are forced to live in provisional huts without light and water or end up in the hands of the "caporali" - an illegal network of exploitation and enslavement of migrant workers. In Basilicata, although there are plans and sufficient funds to build a reception centre, **this construction project has still not started**. Moreover, this facility is supposed to be far away from the urban centres and will probably not be enough to accommodate all seasonal workers (see also [here](#)).

Seasonal work in Italy

Due to the expected shortage of staff in the coming season, Venetian companies are demanding the [entry and employment of migrant workers](#) - an absurd situation considering that the newly elected government around Giorgio Napolitano (Fdi) is in the process of blocking the arrival of migrants and refugees in Italy. In Italy, around one third (29.3%) of the total agricultural labour force are seasonal migrants. The last blockade of arrivals has resulted in entire sectors being inaccessible to migrants, who have

dispersed mainly to the agricultural, construction and catering sectors. Although the adopted Decree-Law 73/2022 of 22 June 2022 provides for simplifications in the entry of migrant workers, the right-wing government coalition is now trying to expand the so-called Flussi Decree in order to circumvent this decree-law. It is urgent to repeal the Flussi Decree so that migrant workers can stay in Italy in full legality and security, commented [Erika Baldin](#) of the 5-Star Movement.

Balkan Route

In the area of Trieste, not far from the border with Slovenia, the border police encountered between [130 and 160 migrants and refugees](#) from Pakistan and Afghanistan who now have to register in Italy.

The **reception system in Trieste is overloaded**, as transfers of asylum seekers to other regions of Italy have dropped sharply since mid-July, explains the President of the Italian Solidarity Consortium - Refugee Office (Ics), [Gianfranco Schiavone](#). As a result, he says, the city's roughly 1,200 reception places are not enough. [As we reported in previous issues](#) of Scirocco, many people are therefore seeking provisional accommodation, sleeping in the open or making their own way to other cities. A situation that, according to Schiavone, cannot be justified by the increase in

arrivals via the so-called Balkan route between Greece and Italy, but by the politically motivated **slowed transfers**. These violations of the reception of migrants and refugees must therefore be clarified on a political and institutional level - until then, everything must be done to support the arriving people with a minimal care structure.

Find more information on the situation in Italy and previous issues of the [Scirocco](#) under "Projects" on our [homepage](#).

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