



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 05/2023
Palermo, 15.03.2023



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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

Humanitarian Corridors

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has again promised a "European solution" to avoid tragedies **such as the dramatic [shipwreck that occurred on February 26](#) near Steccato di Cutro** in the province of Crotone (Calabria), with more than [86 dead](#), including many children. The [EU Commission](#) plans to increase SAR activities in the Mediterranean and provide half a billion euros by 2025 for humanitarian corridors that will allow **50,000 people to be received** in Europe.



Demonstrators on the beach of Cutro, March 12, 2023

However, these statements should not distract from the fact that the EU Commission wants to [further strengthen](#)

[the so-called Libyan coast guard](#) and enter into so-called "anti-smuggling partnerships" with Tunisia and Egypt. These include generous fundings and "support for Libya's maritime border management and search and rescue capabilities." We regularly report on **Libya's inhumane migration policies**, which are also made possible by funds from Europe, and their deadly consequences [in Scirocco as well as in other borderline-europe publications](#).

Italian politics

Italian [Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi](#) pointed out after the February 26 shipwreck that dangerous crossings are an **international problem**. He therefore traveled to France to confer with his French counterpart. Currently, however, a [possible resignation of Piantedosi](#) is also being discussed; he himself responded to the persistent rumors that he would not leave his position with a statement from Malta. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni also commented on the February 26 shipwreck, saying that there had been [many mistakes and negligence](#). For this reason, she summoned Matteo Piantedosi and the new regulations - coming from Salvini's security decrees to tighten the admission conditions for migrants and refugees - have been **frozen** for the time being. In a [letter to the European Council and the EU Commission](#), Meloni stressed the moral duty to prevent such events from happening again. She explained that this requires a kind of Europe that acts quickly and supports Italy. The fact is that **the Council of Ministers is mainly focused on fighting the so-called "traffickers"**. The accident off the Calabrian coast would be the fault of the "traffickers"

alone, not of European migration policy. According to the Italian government, the necessary measures are further isolation and treaties with transit countries and countries of origin to prevent unauthorized entry.



Clothes and wood of the crashed boat in Cutro, photo: Anna Zinnanti

The angry and horrified relatives of the victims and the survivors met Meloni and her ministers in Cutro, and together with other demonstrators, threw [stuffed animals - a reference to the many dead children](#) - at her and the ministers. After the meeting of the Council of Ministers in Cutro, the Prime Minister did not even find it necessary to visit the relatives and survivors in the Pala Milone, the hall in Crotone where all the victims - [86 bodies had been recovered](#) as of March 15 - are laid out. On March 12, local groups called a [nationwide demonstration](#) against letting migrants die at sea, and around 5-6,000 people responded to the call on the beach of the disaster in Calabria.

New government decree

The new ["government decree on the so-called migration flows"](#) will be limited to three years (2023-2025) and contains **eight points**: Among other things, it provides for a tightening of entry regulations through preferential entry quotas for migrant workers from countries that, together with the Italian state, warn of the risks of fleeing to Europe in media campaigns. Simpler procedures for repatriations are also planned, as well as a possible [reward for those who prevent an illegal departure](#). This refers to people who prevent others from fleeing to Italy (!). [Furthermore](#), the decree contains long-term prison sentences up to 30 years for alleged smugglers who are held responsible for catastrophic shipwrecks at sea. In addition, the new decree provides for the acceleration of tenders for the construction of detention centers for deportees and the strengthening of maritime surveillance.

Report on deportations

The [Garante nazionale delle persone private della libertà](#) ("National Guarantor for Persons Deprived of Liberty") has published a third **report on the forced returns of migrants to Tunisia, Nigeria, Egypt, Albania and Georgia carried out between July 2021 and September 2022**. The main objective of the report is to provide a comprehensive assessment and critique of the activities carried out and the measures taken by the relevant authorities. Furthermore, the report emphasizes the importance of language mediators to inform the affected persons about their rights.

Situation of Refugees

Due to the **unacceptable working conditions**, the [employees of the Contrada Imbriacola hotspot](#) in Lampedusa have announced a **strike** for March 15, 2023. Badia Grande, the sponsor of the reception center, is one of the largest cooperatives in the province of Trapani and has been under public criticism for some time for **fraud and inconsistencies in the management of reception centers**. Badia Grande has been accused of corruption in the tendering process for the management of the Trapani Milo detention center for deportees; there are also efforts to deprive Badia Grande of the management of the Lampedusa hotspot and re-tender it. [Recent developments](#) [give](#) hope that a major carrier like Badia Grande will finally be held accountable for its own mistakes.

Migrant Workers

The [Italian government](#) is currently preparing a **decree to admit 100,000 migrant workers per year** - this decree definitely represents a break with the harsh policy of border closure of the Lega under Matteo Salvini, which cannot stand up to the reality of the Italian economy. Companies in industry, agriculture, tourism and the service sector, which depend on these workers (we reported among others [here](#)) - demand double the number. The Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, [Francesco Lollobrigida](#), and the Minister of Civil Protection and Maritime Policy, [Nello Musumeci](#) (both from the

right-wing Fratelli d'Italia party), on the other hand, speak of **approximately 500,000 legal immigrants** who should enter Italy every year through multilateral and bilateral agreements, "because the humanitarian corridors and war refugees are not enough" to meet the needs of the economy. These demands are cynical considering that **many of those people who are already in Italy, do not even receive work permits** and are therefore held in legal limbo and precarious living situations.



Flowers commemorate the dead of Cutro

Reception of unaccompanied minors

Save the Children's new report "[Hidden in plain sight - South Frontier](#)" describes the **precarious situation of unaccompanied minors** in the Italian protection and reception system. According to the authors, it is necessary, among other things, to strengthen **existing regular and safe entry channels** such as family reunification, entry for study and work purposes, and humanitarian corridors in order to reduce the risk of trafficking and promote safe and regular migration. In addition, **Law 47 of 2017**, the so-called "legge Zampa" (after the then Secretary of State in the Ministry of Health), which guarantees the placement of minors within 30 days of

arrival in a reception center or family care circle, must finally be implemented.

"Scafisti"

As the recent statements of the Italian government led by Giorgia Meloni show, there is always a need for clarification that the drivers of the migrant boats ("scafisti") [are not to be equated with those persons](#) who organize the dangerous crossings (human traffickers).



Nationwide demonstration at Cutro beach, March 12, 2023.

The Italian government has been trying to stop both the activities of human traffickers and "scafisti" for a long time, but while human traffickers are usually very difficult to identify and prosecute - investigations and convictions of this kind very rarely succeed - in Italy, dozens of so-called "scafisti" are arrested every year. Since the tragic [shipwreck on February 26](#), the [anti-migration rhetoric](#) against the usually innocent migrants and refugees, who often happen to be at the helm of a boat at the time of observation by the Italian coast guard and are therefore declared as "scafisti", has intensified again.

However, the interview with the brother of one of the arrested fugitives in Cutro shows that most of [those arrested are not "smugglers"](#); the "scafista" too paid

the same amount as the other passengers. In 2022 alone, 52 Turkish, 14 Russian and 9 Ukrainian people were arrested as suspected "scafisti" (see also [this publication](#) by Arci Porco Rosso and the report "[Dal mare al carcere](#)").

The Residents' Registration Office - a sinking ship

In their new article for the joint monitoring project, ARCI Porco Rosso reports on the obstacles to obtain a residence certificate in Palermo. Without a residence certificate, however, migrants are excluded from any social support and services - often with tragic consequences. Click here for "[Titanic](#)".

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

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