



Scirocco
borderline-europe, Sicily –
Part 18/2022
Palermo, 01.11.2022



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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

In February 2023, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Italy and Libya will be automatically extended for another three years - as the deadline to terminate the agreement on 2 November was not met. The agreement is "not a memorandum, but an act of international terrorism", according to comments by [Libyan activist Yambio David Oliver](#). The agreement was signed in 2017 and has since served the European Union as a migration defence (see [here](#) and [here](#)). With this agreement, the Italian state supports the so-called Libyan coast guard through financial and logistical contributions as well as training measures - despite the knowledge of the cruel conditions in Libyan detention centres that migrants and refugees have to endure when, for example, they are picked up on the Mediterranean and brought back to Libya. Since 2017, this has happened to at least 85,000 people, children and adults. In recent months, around 40 NGOs and associations - including Arci, Amnesty International and Open Arms - have protested against the extension of the MoU and documented numerous cases of violence against migrants. [Chiara Denaro of Alarm Phone](#)

reports that these range from the use of firearms and physical violence to dangerous manoeuvres at sea to intercept boats. Operations that have no regard for the protection of human life. Denaro also tells the Alarmphone that refugees regularly tell of their fear of being taken back to Libya and would even prefer death in the Mediterranean. The renewal of the Memorandum means the continuation of a violent cooperation by which Italy officially absolves itself of acts contrary to international law - even if the Italian state finances those who commit these acts for the European Union.

National elections

After the elections in Italy (we reported [here](#) and [here](#)), the new government under [Giorgia Meloni](#) has now officially taken office. After the vote of confidence in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, the government was confirmed by the members of parliament and entrusted with executive functions.

The new Minister of the Interior, Matteo Piantedosi, has presented his [plans for migration and asylum policy](#). These read like a plan against immigration and organisations of the movements of migration and go back to a common cause between Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi and Matteo Salvini, who is now Minister of the Department of Infrastructure and Mobility. In summary, a return of the security decrees (Italian: "decreti sicurezza") from Salvini's term as Minister of the Interior can be expected, as well as the further construction of hotspot centres, the dismantling of the protection system for refugees and migrants, and measures against civil organisations and support structures that will worsen the situation of refugees.

The [government's new line](#) became clear, among other things, after the latest developments at sea. After the rescue ships Ocean Viking and SOS Humanity were able to save a total of more than 800 people from drowning in several rescue missions, they have so far been denied entry to a safe port under the Piantadosi-led Interior Ministry. The government called on the flag states of the two boats, Germany and Norway, to address the situation. Meanwhile, the people on the boats urgently need a safe haven and, as in the past, are becoming the plaything of political decision-makers.

Family reunifications are also to be made significantly more difficult by the new government. In future, among other things, the income level required for family reunification is to be doubled and a two-year stay in Italy is to be introduced as a prerequisite for applying for reunification. This tightening of requirements is in clear contradiction to the spirit of the European directive, commented the [Regional Councillor of Movimento 5 Stelle, Andrea Ussai](#), on the legislative proposal of the new, right-wing commission.

The increasing state repression is also clearly noticeable for Italian citizens. After the elaborate [break-up of an illegal rave](#) near Modena caused a national sensation, the government decided by decree to pass a new law that would sanction organisers of "illegal raves" with up to six years in prison. This disproportionate punishment caused outrage among large parts of the population and led to accusations that the government was increasingly turning

into a police state. Whether the decree is actually constitutional remains to be seen.

National protest actions

Activists from the group ["Le donne e gli uomini di buona volontà del Nuovo Mediterraneo"](#) (engl. Women and Men of Good Will of the New Mediterranean) staged a protest in front of the Libyan consulate in Palermo. They sprayed the walls of the consulate with red liquid - as a symbol of blood - and hung up posters with pictures of migrants and the words "Libyan camps", "torturers" and "consulate of Libyan torturers". This civil disobedience action was filmed and accompanied by the distribution of leaflets. The activists drew attention to the torture, violence and murders in Libyan camps and the violence against migrants and refugees passing through Libya. They describe the Libyan authorities as the "watchdogs of the external border in the south of Europe", whose job is to detain and physically eliminate people whose only "mistake" is to seek safe refuge in countries across the Mediterranean. The activists see themselves as "Mediterranean" and demand a civil right based not on skin colour, wealth or poverty, but on humanity, as well as the right to freedom of movement. Together they want to construct a "new Mediterranean" that represents a common homeland and currently resembles a cemetery without crosses and gravestones.

According to the [missing migrants](#) project of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), at least 25,106 people have drowned or disappeared in the Mediterranean Sea since 2014. The

number of unreported cases is probably much higher. The Mediterranean is the deadliest border in the world.

Right of residence: Citizenship

During his registration in the Camera dei deputati (the second chamber of the Italian Parliament), the newly elected MP of the Left-Green Alliance, [Aboubakar Soumahoro](#), stressed the importance of granting Italian citizenship to children of migrant parents: the children born and raised in Italy were not given any perspective. Therefore, the question of citizenship is a question of dignity, of civilisation. Whoever opposes this is immoral in civil law as well as culturally and politically," Soumahoro stressed.

Studies on migration in Italy

According to the [dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2022](#), migrants in Italy are forced to work under increasingly poor conditions and are systematically excluded from social benefits and the welfare system. The percentage of migrants living in *absolute poverty* continues to increase and, at 32.4%, is four times higher than among Italian citizens (7.2%). *Relative poverty* also affects people without Italian citizenship much more. As the dossier prepared by IDOS in cooperation with Centro Studi Confronti and Istituto di Studi Politici "S. Pio V" shows, even under greater conditions of need, this group of people has much worse access to social benefits than Italians. Discriminatory legal limitations have limited the proportion of foreigners among the recipients of the Citizen's Income to 12% - even though three out of ten of the absolute poor in Italy are migrants.

Civil society projects

The new project "[Claim Asylum EU](#)" of the LeaveNoOneBehind platform is intended to help people seeking protection in the EU who are threatened with deportation to countries where they are at risk of persecution. With the help of an app, refugees will be able to apply for asylum in the EU as soon as they set foot on European soil, in order to exercise their right to asylum before they are deported. The aim of the app is to make rejection as unlikely as possible - because some states with an external EU border have impressively shown that they often do not care about the right to asylum, explains Mareike Ippen from LeaveNoOneBehind.

MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières) runs a [special clinic in Palermo](#) where refugees are treated regardless of their residence status. Many of the patients are still suffering from the physical and psychological consequences of the torture they had to endure during their flight to Italy. The clinic is urgently needed, explains Tarek Keirallah, MSF project coordinator in Palermo, because the public health system in Italy is not able to meet the needs of the patients. It is often a complex web of different needs, including psychological and legal ones, which cannot be solved by medical professionals alone. MSF therefore also takes care of qualified cultural mediators who act as a bridge between patients and service providers. Originally, about 30 people were treated in the clinic. Now there are about 70 and another 30 are on the waiting list, Keirallah said, adding that support from the public and private sectors must be increased accordingly.

Situation of Refugees

In Trieste, more and more migrants are forced to live in slave-like conditions. In September alone, about ten reports of potential victims of trafficking and exploitation were filed with the Commission - and this number is increasing in view of the numerous arrivals via the so-called Balkan route from South Eastern Europe to Italy, as [Hermine Gbedo, contact person of the Stella Polare association](#), reports. These and similar developments were discussed at the fourth national meeting of contact points, which took place in Trieste in mid-October and was attended by numerous private institutions and volunteers from support structures for "invisible people" (people without residence permits who work and live in secret) who have become victims of human trafficking and severe exploitation - for example in the form of forced prostitution or even labour, begging and forced marriage.

In Puglia, too, human trafficking in reception centres for migrants is on the rise. This is according to data collected by the [regional project "Puglia non Tratta 5, insieme per le vittime"](#) (Puglia without trafficking, together for the victims). The data points to an increase in indoor sexual exploitation and the persistence of inhumane living conditions for victims. In addition, the recruitment and subjugation of trafficked persons is increasingly taking place via digital platforms. Significant places in this context are Apulian reception structures, especially a centre in Bari Palese. As in Trieste, migrants in Puglia are exploited sexually (85%) and as labour (15%). The regional anti-trafficking network has counted about 2,500

trafficked persons in the last two years, 80% of whom are women, 17% men and 3% trans people.

Since the beginning of this year, 70 people have already committed suicide in Italian prisons. One of them is the [Moroccan Dahou](#), who died at the age of 26 in Sollicciano prison. Even the prison police union Uilpa describes this cruel phenomenon as a massacre with no end in sight due to the merciless harshness of the prison system in Italy. Since 2000, at least 1,291 people have been killed in Italian prisons - through murder, desperation and a discriminatory reception system that imprisons migrants and refugees instead of giving them a perspective.

Supply and accommodation

In [Ruvo di Puglia](#), a temporary village with mobile homes for the accommodation of migrant seasonal workers is to be installed at the beginning of the olive harvest and will remain there until the end of the harvest season in December. With the help of regional funds, necessary measures to ensure water supply, electricity supply, sewage system, waste collection, socio-cultural mediation and health care will be secured.

The situation is different in Siena, where migrants are forced to camp in the Piazza della Stazione in front of the train station due to overburdened reception systems and bureaucratic hurdles. There they find themselves in highly precarious conditions and are exposed to [hostility from right-wing individuals and parties](#).

[Arrivals in Trieste](#) remain at a high level in October and represent a new record for the month. This can be explained, among other things, by the mild autumn weather, which favours travelling to Italy via the Balkan route. The reception and transfer system is accordingly overloaded.

An [area occupied by migrants near the Roman theatre in Ventimiglia](#) was evacuated by the Italian police. A group of migrants had set up a small camp there where they sought shelter at night. Such improvised sleeping places are necessary mainly because the authorities do not provide sufficient accommodation or because applications for asylum and humanitarian protection are stalled and migrants find themselves in a legal limbo (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

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

Contact

[borderline-europe](#)
Menschenrechte ohne Grenzen e.V.
<https://www.borderline-europe.de/>
italia@borderline-europe.de