



Thoughts and Testimonies from the Sportello Mobile

Giulia Gianguzza

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Note from July 7, 2026: This article was written for the Porco Rosso blog prior to the horrific incident in Amendolara on June 1, 2026, where four agricultural workers lost their lives after burning to death inside a minivan at a rest stop. A fifth person managed to save themselves. Ongoing investigations frame these events within the context of severe labor exploitation and "caporalato"¹. Thousands of people marched through the streets of Amendolara, participating in the nationwide demonstration against exploitation and caporalato organized by CGIL and FLAI CGIL. On June 25, another agricultural worker, Haddad Taher, died while working in the fields during a heat wave. A few days ago, on July 4, hundreds of residents from the Torretta Antonacci settlement in Bari occupied the Basilica of San Nicola to demand residency documents, housing, and a life with dignity, in coordination with USB in Foggia. The following thoughts were written prior to these events and therefore do not reference them.

In recent weeks, several agricultural workers have lost their lives in Italy: on the way to the fields or in the places where they are forced to live because of their work. We want to share some thoughts and testimonies from the daily work of our Sportello Mobile [mobile outreach desk] in the agricultural regions.

On April 3, 2026, 29-year-old Alagie Singathe took his life in the Torretta Antonacci settlement in San Severo (Foggia).

On May 8 in Chioggia, Yassin Mazi (28 years old), Abdelghani Gari (32), and Saifi El Arbi (35) lost their lives in a traffic accident. They were on their way to the fields to harvest radicchio, riding in a van with six other workers.

In the early hours of May 9, 35-year-old Bakary Sako was attacked and killed by five youths in Taranto while cycling to work in the fields.

During the night between May 11 and 12, another agricultural worker whose name has not been made public died in the area of Poggio Imperiale. A fire broke out in the caravan where they were sleeping.

¹ "Caporalato" refers to a system of illegal labor recruitment that has developed in Italy over the course of history, in which so-called "caporali" recruit cheap labor—often migrants—for agricultural operations. This system is characterized by precarious working conditions, low wages, and various forms of exploitation. Caporalato is particularly widespread in the agricultural sector of southern Italy.

The murder of Bakary Sako by a group of very young perpetrators carries a severe racist motive. But the other losses also speak to a context of widespread precarity, stigma, and exclusion—and yes, of systemic racism and violence.

The conditions that make these deaths possible are not anomalies.

In the fields, at work, and along the routes between their accommodations and the fields, people frequently live under conditions of extreme precarity and are exposed to numerous risks.

Different provinces, different harvests; people move from one season to the next. Yet the reality stays the same: little changes. Stories of fires, accidents, work-related injuries, difficulties in finding housing, evictions, long daily commutes, and unprotected carpooling arrangements.

These are stories of immense courage and inner strength. Stories of people who have learned to navigate these systems, circumvent every trap, keep going to send money home, make themselves heard in the spaces between the everyday struggle for self-determination, and remain in solidarity.

The living conditions of agricultural workers are frequently discussed only after a tragedy occurs, and then mostly in ways that either victimize or criminalize them. Emphasis is placed if someone lacks valid residency documents, as if this were their own fault.

The presence of migrant farmworkers moving into agricultural production zones is treated as an emergency and an annoyance, rather than with the recognition of dignity and respect due to workers who sustain an entire production system.

While institutions claim to focus on the "fight against caporalato" and "overcoming informal settlements," agricultural workers report:

- widespread undeclared work and poorly secured employment relationships, which they frequently do not report because their situation does not fit the image of the "ideal victim";
- the difficulty of obtaining a regular employment or rental contract due to their legal status—a situation further exacerbated by increasingly restrictive migration policies;
- the fact that finding any place to live at all in the locations they move to for work is often one of their greatest problems.

These are the very conditions faced daily by the people we have met over the past few months through our Sportello Mobile in Sicily.

One of these individuals nearly cut off their thumb with electric shears while pruning olive trees. The employer left them outside the hospital and cut off all contact after the finger surgery and hospital discharge. To this day, the person has not fully regained mobility in their hand, with severe consequences for their health and professional situation, and consequently for their housing situation.

Also at the end of May, we learned from the press that the Italian government intends to build another CPR² in Castel Volturno, in an area where agricultural production takes place.

This is no coincidence. The deaths of recent weeks are not exceptions.

They bear witness to a production system that continues to rely on a vicious cycle of border regimes, legal blackmailability, housing market exclusion, and the resulting job insecurity. A system that seeks to reduce agricultural workers to mere cogs in an exploitative mechanism.

To them, we offer our unreserved solidarity, our attention, our listening, and all our energy.

Translated from Italian by Gaetano Manzoni and Giulia Gregor.

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² “Centro di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio,” which translates to “Detention Center for Repatriation.” CPRs are facilities where undocumented migrants are detained for the purpose of their deportation from Italian territory.