

borderline-europe, Sizilien

# SCIROCCO

*News from Italy*



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

## Political and social situation

### Closure of the CPR in the Ponte Galeria demanded

Following a hearing, the President of the [Capitoline Commission for social Affairs](#), Nella Converti, and the Vice President of Roma Futura, Tiziana Biolghini, have demanded to close the detention center (Centri di permanenza per i rimpatri, CPR) in Ponte Galeria near Rome due to inhumane conditions. In 2023, more than 1,100 people were detained at the CPR, of whom less than one in four was deported. In view of these figures, there is a lack of legal requirements for detention leading to deportation.

**Detention awaiting deportation can therefore be seen as a form of detention without crime and without sentence** - and due to the conditions of detention, it also resembles a form of torture, according to Converti. We can only hope that it will be really closed. This is of course in contrast to Italy's migration policy, which has provided for a deportation detention center in every region since 2023. Once again, Meloni's election propaganda has been reduced to absurdity.

### Bordercontrols Italy – Slovenia

The Italian government is maintaining the Schengen border controls at the border with Slovenia. The [official](#) explanation is that they fear that terrorists are blending in with refugees entering the country and that they could be intercepted by border controls. In this context, it should be mentioned that [several people](#) have already been [arrested and detained](#) at the Slovenian-Italian border in recent days as alleged "smugglers" for "facilitating unauthorized entry". The **suspension of the Schengen Agreement** and thus the implementation of border controls are currently the focus of politicians and police authorities in order to control and block the movement of migration. The [Slovenian Ministry of the Interior](#) denies a report by the Slovenian news agency STA, according to which there is a request from the Italian government to close the border. Border controls will be extended until June 18 for the time being. Last year, however, Slovenia acted similarly to Italy and simply introduced border controls at the borders with Croatia and Hungary.

### Italy bans NGO-airplanes

Italy forbids [airplanes from non-governmental organizations](#), such as the Seabird from Sea Watch, to take off from the islands near the migration routes. Locations such as Lampedusa and Sicily are concerned. In a written order, ENAC stated that the planes were "unjustified", put a strain on the official rescue teams and endangered the safety of the refugees. Although the work is made even more difficult by the banning of the planes, Sea Watch will not stop it, it said. On May 15th, the Italian Chamber of Deputies asked ENAC how the ban on aircrafts was justified, as they were only being used for **monitoring purposes** and were not coordinating rescue operations, which means their usage would be legal.



Photo: Sea-Watch

### Innocent imprisoned as „scafisti”

In recent years, the court - and in particular the judge [Mauro Bottone](#)- has **falsely accused innocent people of human trafficking**. At second instance, they were completely cleared because the charge of "smuggling" did not apply. The victims were "all very young, all with ruined lives, all forced to spend years in a cell because someone dragged the investigations or didn't carry them out at all", reported [Angela Nocioni](#). The newspaper L'Unità published a suitably titled article on the subject: **"Pray to God that you don't end up in the hands of the Locri court, the factory of the 'scafisti'"**. Shami Mohammad, who had been unjustly imprisoned since May 16, 2022, as well as Ashoour Mahrous Eldenasaouri Tamer, Ramandan Abou Sbeisbaa El Gendy, Ahmed Mohammed Mahmud Ali, El Said Hassan Imad Ibrahim, Essaid Hassan Ali Essaid, Jabir Ali Salem Mohammed Jaleh Hid, Rait Ibrahim Said Hassil and [Marjan Jamali](#), a 29-year-old woman from Tehran, suffered this fate. Marjan was traveling alone with her eight-year-old son and has been

awaiting trial in prison since late October 2023 without ever having been questioned by a judge: she had been named as an escort during the interrogation on the dock right after disembarkation by three Iraqi men who had tried to rape her during the crossing, which landed her in prison.



Photo: Matthew Ansley, unsplash

### Political situation Europe

In Italy, **national topics are dominating the European Parliament elections** in June. Unsurprisingly, the [right-wing](#) politicians are trying to campaign primarily on “security and the fight against irregular immigration”. The two new reception centers in Albania are a heated discussion, in particular the associated construction delays. The AVS (Left-Green Alliance) is criticizing the construction and plans to submit an examination of the order placement, as they were started “without a public tender, without proper evaluation of alternatives and without taking into account the risks to human rights”. While the right-wing party Forza Italia wants to reduce migration movements with a 10-point plan, the Greens and Social Democrats want to stop the externalization policy and criminalization of Europe. With the opposing positions of “peace, land and dignity”, the **“military logic” of controlling migration** is to be overcome and the “debt” to countries of the Global South is to be cleared with investments and the creation of an “organized network of aid, training, work and study cooperation” in order to address the causes of migration “at the root”.

### GEAS: civil resistance is forming

Following the adoption of the new European Asylum and Migration Pact by the European Parliament (we reported in [previous issues](#) of this newsletter), non-governmental organizations are now responding

with **a manifesto to be read out in Rebbio on 29th and 30th June**. [The Freedom of Movement Manifesto](#) was written by 15 associations in order to call for support for those “who move along all routes”. “The network,” explained the organizers, “was born from the revelation of their own **daily practice of civil disobedience against Italian and European migration policies**, against internal and external borders, and from the political commitment to create safe passages and to demand freedom of movement and the right to choose where to live for all citizens of the world.

In her new book, author [Sally Hayden](#) reflects on EU migration policy and considers what could worsen after the election and what impact this could have on refugees and migration routes. “Europe is spending money to arm itself against migrants, but in doing so it is helping the regimes that are causing the crises,” says Hayden.

### Political situation in Libya

Italian President [Giorgia Meloni](#) once again traveled to Libya to negotiate the issue of migration and **Libyan-Italian relations**. She met with both the leader of the militia Haftar and the presidential council and reaffirmed the cooperation between the two countries with regard to **blocking the movement of migrants**. Meloni would also like to strengthen cooperation between Libya and [the EU](#) in the future. It has long been known that Libya is not a country where migrants are safe. Just a few days ago, the Libyan authorities arrested a person in Libya who ran a [“secret” torture prison](#). The detainee admitted **to torturing people in this prison, starving them to death and making them disappear in the desert when they died**. Unfortunately, these are not isolated cases - and yet Italy and the EU are constantly exploring further opportunities for cooperation.

### Political situation Tunisia

**EU countries** are also cooperating with **Tunisia** to “combat irregular migration”, for example by supporting the [Tunisian coastguard](#). With its “policy of outsourcing sea controls [...], the European Union is pursuing the dangerous and illusory goal of preventing the arrival of people on Italian shores at all costs”. It was only in mid-April that the Italian head of government, Giorgia Meloni, traveled to Tunisia to strengthen cooperation between the two

countries. On the occasion of this visit, [activists](#) from the “Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES)” gathered in front of the Italian embassy in Tunis **to protest against the murderous migration policies of the two governments.**

In [this detailed article](#), Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo also explains how violently the Tunisian government treats migrants, with Black people in particular experiencing institutional and physical racist violence. Once again, it becomes clear that **Tunisia cannot seriously be described as a safe country of origin** and that cooperation between Tunisia and the EU should therefore be terminated rather than intensified. However, it must also be said that the European demands are contributing to this rapid increase in violence against refugees in the first place.

## Situation of refugees

### Topic Lebanon

#### Lebanon, another gatekeeper for the frightened EU?

The [humanitarian corridor](#) protocols, which bring vulnerable Syrian refugees from Lebanon to Italy on official flights, have been in place since 2017. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the church association (**Federazione delle chiese evangeliche in Italia, Tavola Valdese, Comunità di Sant'Egidio**) agreed to take in 1,000 people over a period of two years each. The costs are covered by the churches alone (!). According to our counts, 326 people arrived in Italy via the humanitarian corridor between 2023 and May 2024, far fewer than the committed amount. This is particularly dramatic when considering **the current situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon**, which [Anja Pilchowski and Ahmad Ibrahim](#) report on [in their article](#).

#### „The Architecture of Injustice“

The new article by our monitoring partner Arci Porco Rosso Palermo deals with **the miserable conditions at the immigration office in Palermo**. Despite persistent criticism in recent years, nothing has changed and hopes of improvement through a new building for the authority have vanished: even in the new building, the facilities remain precarious, the incredible waiting times have not changed and there is still a lack of staff. You can read the report [here](#).



Tripoli. View of the Qobbeh district, where many Syrian refugees live. Photo: Anja Pilchowski

### Racism

After the racist attack in Calabria almost a year ago (we reported [here](#)), the attacker was finally arrested: on [June 19th 2023](#), a group of refugees were attacked on a public square in the presence of numerous people. Two of those affected were injured in the attack, one of them seriously. A [23-year-old Italian](#) man has now been arrested and detained for attempted murder based on racist motivations.

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found under „projects“ on our [Homepage](#), in previous issues of [Scirocco](#) and in our [Spotlight „Kosmos Palermo“](#).

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