

borderline-europe, Sizilien

# SCIROCCO

*News from Italy*



Scirocco [ʃiˈrɔkko-Schirokko] is a hot, strong south-easterly wind that carries dust and sand across the Mediterranean to Sicily and northern Italy, often lasting for just a few hours. This briefing note has been published regularly since March 2021 and is currently issued on a monthly basis.

## Political and social situation

The severe issues in Italian reception centers are repeatedly brought to court. Currently, a [complaint from the Osservatorio Migranti in Verona](#) is being reviewed by the Prefecture, **demanding the forced administration of all CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria) centers managed by the San Francesco cooperative**. Previously, the Administrative Court of the Veneto region dismissed a similar lawsuit. According to the judges, the cooperative does not suffer "serious and irreparable harm," as stated in the ruling published by [Laura Tedesco](#) in the *Corriere di Verona*. In some of the cooperative's shelters, such as the one in Gazzo Veronese, sanitary conditions remain problematic, and the lack of care for asylum seekers negatively impacts their health. Due to the lack of care of the outdoor areas, there was a "full-blown invasion of cockroaches and bugs," which became a nightmare for the building's residents. Additionally, the disbursement of pocket money was systematically delayed, and clothing and hygiene items were not provided.

On an international level, the Italian state has been condemned for the **unlawful detentions** and poor conditions in its reception facilities. According to an [evaluation by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers](#), Italy has failed to implement the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) *J.A. and Others v. Italy* (Appeal No. 21329/18) regarding the **detention and conditions within the Lampedusa hotspot**. Italian authorities have once again been urged to take the necessary measures to enforce the ruling. Italian non-governmental organizations ASGI and Maldusa participated in the proceedings with a [memorandum](#). The hotspots are still **systematically used as places of informal detention for foreign individuals**, are often overcrowded, the conditions are unacceptable, and access to legal information is very limited, according to ASGI and Maldusa.

[Amnesty International](#) also criticizes Italy for detaining migrants in facilities under punitive conditions that do not meet international

standards and **deprive people of their freedom and dignity**. Furthermore, access to asylum procedures and courts is not guaranteed. These concerns are even more urgent in light of Italy's decision to establish detention centers on Albanian territory, warns Amnesty International.



Foto: Hédi Benyounes, unsplash

Matteo Piantedosi plans to establish a deportation detention center (CPR, Centri di permanenza per i rimpatri) in each region of Italy in the future. **Currently, there are 10 CPRs in operation**, located in Bari, Brindisi, Caltanissetta, Rome, Palazzo San Gervasio (Potenza), Trapani (unclear if open), Gradisca d'Isonzo, Macomer (Nuoro), and Milan. According to Italian Interior Minister [Matteo Piantedosi](#), the sites for new deportation detention centers are to be located in barracks, on disused military grounds, or in former industrial areas. There, people from so-called "safe third countries" could be detained for up to 18 months.

## Human Rights Violations in Tunisia

As reported in detail in [issue 12/2024](#) of this newsletter, **state violence and racism against migrants in Tunisia** are continuously increasing. Last May, forced deportations at the borders with Algeria and Libya were resumed in Tunisia, and activists, lawyers, and journalists who protested in front of the buildings of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UNHCR were arrested. This is accompanied by the eviction of asylum seekers from informal shelters and the repression of humanitarian organizations working in the field of migration. More information can be found [here](#) and [here](#), as well as in a [United Nations \(UN\) report](#) on the massive mistreatment of refugees at the Tunisian border and deportations

to Libyan torture prisons. According to the UN, **2,000 people have already been deported this year to the detention centers of al-Assa and Nalounach in Libya**. For this, Tunisian border officials collaborated with their Libyan counterparts. The report is based on interviews with those affected, who mainly fled from Palestine, Syria, Sudan, and South Sudan. **Signs of torture** were detected in three individuals.

### **Updates on the Bilateral Agreement Between Italy and Albania**

The **social cooperative Medihospes has won a contract worth 133 million euros** to operate Italian reception centers for asylum seekers in Gjader and Shengjin (both in Albania). As a result, the company has now established a **monopoly** in Italy, according to a [critical analysis by Altreconomia](#). Since the beginning of the year, Medihospes has already secured 62 contracts. Among other things, it manages the hotspot in Messina, the facility in the former Cavarzerani barracks in Udine, and the two largest reception centers in Milan. The company offers a variety of "services," ranging from temporary housing assistance centers (Caat) for emergency shelters, to support for people with disabilities and minors, and various tenders for "technical administrative support services for municipal offices." **The cooperative has repeatedly faced criminal proceedings** in the past, explains [Fabrizio Coresi of ActionAid](#), primarily due to logistical, administrative, or structural irregularities, but also in relation to the provision of goods and services for people.



Foto: Jorono, pixaby

It is still not definitively clear whether the bilateral agreement between Italy and Albania is in line with European law and whether [sanctions](#) against Italy might follow. Ideologically, the agreement is already **another precedent for the inhumane, violent, and human rights-violating asylum and migration policy of the European Union**, opening the door to similar plans. The [German federal government](#) is now also exploring "options" for outsourcing asylum procedures to transit and third countries. During a meeting between Chancellor Scholz and the state premiers on June 20, the federal government was asked to build on the deal between Italy and Albania to "develop concrete models for conducting asylum procedures in transit and third countries and, in particular, to address the necessary changes to EU regulations and, if necessary, to national asylum law," **meaning to change laws in accordance with the inhumane migration policy of systematically outsourcing asylum seekers**.

In the commentary "[A Wasted Billion: The Absurdity of Migration Centers in Albania](#)," Innocenzo Cipoletta highlights what the Italian state could have done instead of establishing extraterritorial centers: **investing in the reception, education, and housing of migrants**. Instead, more than one billion euros will be funneled into the centers in Albania over the next five years. **A ship was rented from a private company for approximately 150,000 euros per day**. Up to 800 refugees, who were rescued by Italian authorities in international waters, are to be transferred onto this ship and then brought to Albania. The opposition criticizes that many of the figures are misleading: for example, the government claims that 3,000 people can be processed through the Albanian centers each month. However, according to the opposition, the mentioned 3,000 is the maximum capacity of the centers. To fulfill these promises, 3,000 asylum procedures would need to be completed and returns carried out each month. Currently, procedures in Italy take much longer, which means significantly fewer people can likely be accommodated in the Albanian centers than the government publicly claims. Additionally, according to the [plans of the Italian Ministry of the Interior](#), only adult men from so-called "safe

countries of origin" will be sent to Albania; women, minors, and vulnerable refugees will continue to be received in Italy. At sea, a few nautical miles south of Lampedusa, asylum seekers are to be transferred from Coast Guard rescue boats to a private ship, and then taken on a roughly 50-hour journey to the Albanian port of Shëngjin. From there, they are to be taken to a second detention center, located 20 kilometers further inland. **Both facilities will be under Italian jurisdiction and operated by Italian personnel**, despite being located on Albanian territory.

### EU Externalization Policy: Borders Kill

The Fortress Europe kills – this is, unfortunately, not news but well-known to those who have closely examined the methods of European border policy.



„Die Regierung tötet auch im Sommer“, Palermo

In [this analysis](#), Maurizio Pagliassotti shows that the recurring shipwrecks, in which countless people die each time, are not accidents but the result of a **European Union strategy based on violence and repression**, further supplemented by bilateral agreements and extraterritorial hotspots (such as in Albania). The consequences are catastrophic, as demonstrated by the **recent shipwreck 120 miles off the coast of Roccella Jonica (Italy)**, where 66 people drowned, including dozens of children. The boat, likely coming from the area of Izmir (Turkey), was in the Italian search and rescue zone, yet the shipwreck was not prevented. Greece, too, has turned its geopolitical position into an ideological and economic advantage: "The land border with Turkey along the Evros River is, in fact, a war zone where an unprecedented military apparatus is

being used against fleeing people trying to cross the waterway on rafts. The same applies to the Aegean Sea, where the BBC recently condemned the out-of-control practices of the coast guard," the author notes.

### Situation of Refugees

#### Exploitation of Migrants

A new case of the **systematic exploitation of migrant workers** has come to light through a witness testimony and official investigations. A Moroccan man, who was forced to work over 15 hours a day for months—working as a farm laborer during the day and guarding the barn at night—filed a complaint: "I had to sleep in a trailer next to a manure factory, which had neither light nor a water connection. To wash myself, I had to use water from the barn, and once a week, I could shower in the owners' apartment [...]. When I got injured, no one took me to the hospital." This is how the individual described the [situation on a farm near Teramo \(Abruzzo\)](#). The two employers, a mother and her son, recruited migrants under false promises on the internet and are now facing trial for illegal recruitment and exploitation of labor in violation of national contracts and occupational safety regulations.



Foto: Nikko Macaspac, unsplash

While the woman has been banned from the capital, her son, who served as the company's coordinator, is under house arrest. The victim, along with other victims of forced labor, is currently in a protected facility managed by the [United Nations](#). It is possible that other individuals were also exploited on the same farm—and not just there. Nadia Urbinati highlights the **business with**

**illegalized migrants** in [this article](#) for the Italian newspaper Domani: "It is not true that migrants are invisible. They are very visible to everyone, but our norms and mentality serve to shield them. We don't want to see them as workers, but as irregulars who are exposed to the interests of those who are not irregular." She explains how the problematic narrative of 'illegalized' individuals actually facilitates their exploitation.

**The Fillea CGIL union of Modena advocates both on the streets and legally for exploited migrant workers** and has achieved some successes. "We are considered a street union [...]. We want to give a voice, dignity, and freedom to oppressed workers. The Bossi-Fini law must be repealed because it makes migrants vulnerable to blackmail and even more susceptible," explained Pietro Imperato from the Fillea CGIL secretariat in Modena. He recounted the story of a construction worker who was exploited with a wage of one euro per hour and without insurance. This case symbolizes the difficulties many migrant workers face daily: **exploitation, language barriers, and lack of support**. Arianna Gaddi from the Center for Foreign Workers explained that the affected worker reached out to the Center for Foreign Workers at the Chamber of Labor in Modena. Together with interpreter Souad Elkaddani and lawyer Vandelli, the center then filed a complaint with the labor inspectorate regarding the employment relationship and unpaid wages, and pressed charges against the employer for severe exploitation. This case highlights the important role of unions and other support organizations in enforcing the rights of migrant workers.

In Campofiorito, a small town in the province of Palermo (Sicily), 142 migrants currently live among 1,150 residents in a SAI (System for Accommodation and Integration). **This makes Campofiorito the Italian town with the highest ratio of migrants to residents**. At the beginning of July, the town celebrated the 10th anniversary of the integration project with a public debate moderated by journalist Salvatore Ferro, accompanied by a program featuring videos, music, dance, and food.

The current mayor, Giuseppe Oddo, views the town's policy as "fruit, which has yet to ripen further, of a policy and posture that is both mental and ethical and that involves the entire community" Additionally, Campofiorito recognizes that integration is necessary - and not a crisis. The town administration particularly highlighted as a successful example of integration that six of the migrants now have employment contracts, two of them permanent. At this point, the city is celebrating achievements that should actually be considered the norm.

### **Criminalization of Refugees: Quarterly Report of the "From Sea to Prison" Project by Arci Porco Rosso and borderline-europe**

The report presents cases of incarcerated individuals with whom Arci Porco Rosso is currently in contact and whose court proceedings they are monitoring. It analyzes the impact of the criminalizing narrative of the right-wing Italian government and the effects of the enacted laws on those directly affected.

### **"The Forgotten Youth of the Old Town"**

In their latest article, Arci Porco Rosso reports on the situation of young people in Palermo, who are being increasingly marginalized by current policies and thus pushed into crime. From the lack of counselling services and integration measures, to precarious residence status and gentrification - the political course must take a new direction in order to prevent further marginalization and violence. The report can be read [here](#).

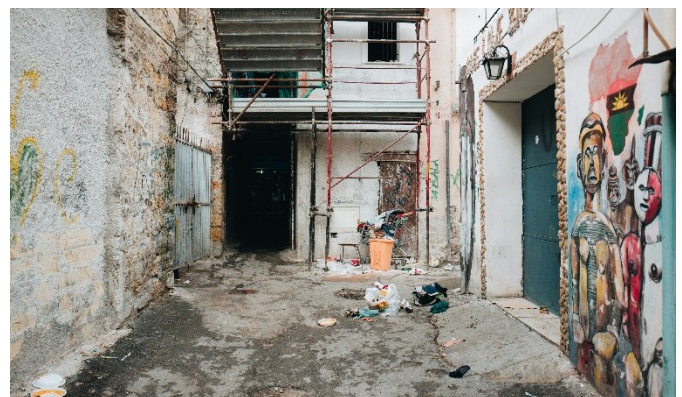


Foto: Tomas Anton Escobar, unsplash

## **Sudanese refugees in Lebanon - the overlooked community and its struggle with the UNHCR and Lebanese society**

In the new article by Anja Pilchowski, the focus is on the problems faced by Sudanese refugees in Lebanon. The lack of registration by UNHCR and Sudanese authorities pushes people into the status of illegalized refugees, preventing them from being registered for resettlement programs and from accessing official employment contracts and health insurance. The article can be found [here](#).

previous issues of [Scirocco](#) and in our [spotlight "Cosmos Palermo"](#) (only in german).



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**Further information on the situation in Italy can be found under "Projects" on our [homepage](#), in**