

borderline-europe, Sicily

# 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

The [Court of Florence](#) has suspended the deportation of a Gambian citizen who was denied international protection under an '**accelerated procedure**'. The reason for this was the duration of the judgment. It took six months for the Questura (police office) to transmit the data, which contrasts with the procedure used and provides for significantly shorter deadlines of nine days in total. **If Italy cannot meet the timeframe of an accelerated procedure, the ordinary procedure, which provides for a more thorough examination of the case, must be applied.** The ruling, which is supported by a similar decision by the United Chambers of the Court of Cassation on April 9, is a landmark decision for courts throughout Italy and stands in strong contrast to the migration policy promises made by the Italian government under Giorgia Meloni, such as the rapid deportation of as many asylum seekers as possible.

### Updates on the migration pact

Only a short time after the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum was adopted, [numerous EU states](#) and also non-EU states (often referred to as "third countries") are already calling for further deportations, including Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania. In a letter **to the European Commission**, the 15 signatories call for refugees to be intercepted on the high seas and "brought to a partner country outside the EU". The agreements with Turkey, Tunisia and Albania (through Italy) and the British government's inhumane "Rwanda model" are also praised. All these mechanisms push for the **externalization of asylum procedures**. Professor Maurizio Ambrosini, an Italian expert on migration, commented on the letter: "Overall, a European Union is emerging that is geared towards reducing the admission of refugees. However, it is divided between those who adhere to humanitarian values and those who have **elevated border protection to an inviolable**

**principle.**" Germany, France and Spain – strong voices within the EU – have not signed the letter.

### EU deals with North African states

The EU's migration deal with Tunisia is once again facing criticism. One month after the agreement was signed, the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) sent a letter to the EU criticizing its policies in North Africa and its support for governments with **increasingly racist and discriminatory policies**. In particular, the UN body criticized that the "future implementation [of the agreement] could lead to a possible **violation of the principle of non-refoulement and the human rights of refugees**". During the same period, the EU negotiated further agreements with Egypt and Lebanon, which also aim to cooperate in the "fight against irregular migration movements". The externalization of borders has now become the political norm in the EU. This is also reflected in the statements made by EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen, who sees the memorandum with Tunisia as a good start "for future relations with the North African countries".

### Election to the EU Parliament



Photo: Guillaume Périgois, unsplash

In the current election campaign for the European elections, the promises made by the various – mostly far-right – parties in relation to refugees and migration are particularly striking due to their harshness. "The image that emerges is of an increasingly closed and **inaccessible continent, with traits that border on open racism,**" says the

[AVIS association \(Associazione Volontari Italiani del Sangue\) Legnano](#) in an article on the upcoming elections. You can examine the party programs of Italian political parties according to their positions on migration and asylum [here](#).

**“An incurable phenomenon of systematic, murderous and political violence”**

How the manipulation of information restricts freedom of expression and judicial independence in post-fascist Italy. Fake news, decontextualized information, silencing – these are all methods used to support the migration invasion narrative. The right not only uses simple false reports, but also threatens freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary. How far away from fascism is Italy really? [Here](#) are some thoughts from borderline-europe, Italy.

**Albania: Italy's extraterritorial hotspots**

Since the beginning of June, 20 police officers are guarding the empty construction sites in Albania where the Italian state's initial reception centers are to be set up in the future. An initial structure has already been built, but it will take months before the hotspot can be open. However, monitoring the site already costs around **2,000 euros per day plus accommodation and meals for the officials** – money that could instead be invested in a humane reception system.

There are still **disagreements between Italy and Albania regarding authority over the Albanian areas where Italy is building its own hotspots**. For example, the Italian politician [Angelo Bonelli](#), who wanted to exercise his inspection powers, was initially denied access to the hotspot in Schengjin (Albania). After a political struggle, Bonelli was finally allowed to enter. The Italian Supreme Court and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) are currently examining the so-called 'accelerated procedures' (which are supposed to take place in Albania as well) at the Italian border, procedures that many Italian judges reject. Non-governmental organizations, aid organizations and initiatives are firmly opposed to this outsourcing of the Italian migration and asylum system.

In addition to the already exorbitant costs (around one billion euros over five years) for the centers in Albania, there are now also the [costs of the ships to](#)

[be hired](#) in order to bring the refugees rescued by the Italian authorities (only men from safe countries of origin) to Albania. The handover is to take place south of Lampedusa on the high seas, a dangerous undertaking. The cost so far: **13.5 million euros in rent for three months**. An unparalleled waste of taxpayers' money.

**Tunisia: Protests against authoritarian policies**  
**Hundreds of people have held a demonstration in Tunis (Tunisia) to protest against the authoritarian and racist policies of Tunisian President Kais Saied.**

This was triggered by the numerous arrests of journalists, lawyers and civil rights activists in recent weeks. The Italian state and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni were also accused of being **“accomplices to the Tunisian dictator's human rights crimes”** because they maintain close relations between the Tunisian president and the European Union.

**New report: “Desert Dumps”**

The new report [“Desert Dumps”](#), published by Lighthouse in cooperation with the Washington Post, Enass, Der Spiegel, El Pais, IrpiMedia, ARD, Inkyfada and Le Monde, sheds light on the dramatic **human rights situation of predominantly black refugees in North African countries**. They are deported from Tunisia and Libya, among other places, into the desert and abandoned to their fate. The report also shows how **Europe supports and finances the human rights violations of refugees under the guise of 'migration management'**.



Photo: Halima Bouchouicha, unsplash

“Europe supports, funds and is directly involved in clandestine operations in North African countries where tens of thousands of Black people are dumped in the desert or in remote areas every year to prevent them from coming to the EU”. Europe is also knowingly involved in the “systematic racial profiling, detention and deportation of Black communities in at least three North African countries”, according to the [editors](#). After a year of research, Lighthouse Reports came to the conclusion that the Tunisian National Guard was at the center of the [deportations into the desert](#), with much of the funding coming from European countries.

This [detailed article](#) by Argo, “Cento occhi su Catania” (“Hundred Eyes on Catania”), also reports on the authoritarian government practices of Tunisian President Kais Saied and the **collective expulsion of Black migrants in Tunisia**. “Saied’s pseudo-democracy, so highly praised by the Italian government, will reinforce the destabilization of the Mediterranean region, as has already happened in Libya,” says Argo in an analysis of the **Italian perspective** and support for Saied’s regime.

### Situation of the refugees

[Marjan Jamali](#), a 27-year-old Iranian woman from Tehran, survivor of sexualized violence and mother of a son, was arrested as a ‘scafista’ (people who drive the boats or help the drivers) when she landed in Italy and imprisoned for seven months for **‘aiding and abetting illegal immigration’** (we reported [here](#)). Months passed before she was informed of the charges in her language, Farsi, and the public became aware of her case. In the meantime, deputy Laura Boldrini, Amnesty International, several local and non-local committees as well as the Guarantor for the Rights of Persons in Detention have become involved in her case. But the judges at the Reggio Calabria investigating court do not believe Marjan Jamali’s story of escape as a survivor of sexual violence at the hands of her husband. Not even her scars are enough. The three men who sexually harassed her on the refugee boat and ultimately accused her of being a ‘scafista’ have disappeared – but her statements are taken at face value.

**She has now been released to the SAI shelter** (Sistema Accoglienza Integrazione, SAI – Italian Reception and Integration System) **in Camini and placed under house arrest with electronic shackles**.

This was decided, among other things, because she is a single mother with an 8-year-old son who she has barely been able to see in recent months and who has had to be looked after by another family.

These violations of human and children’s rights are occurring because Meloni is using the crackdown on “traffickers” as an election campaign method and prioritizing increased arrests. There are hardly any fair trials and respect for human rights is neglected.

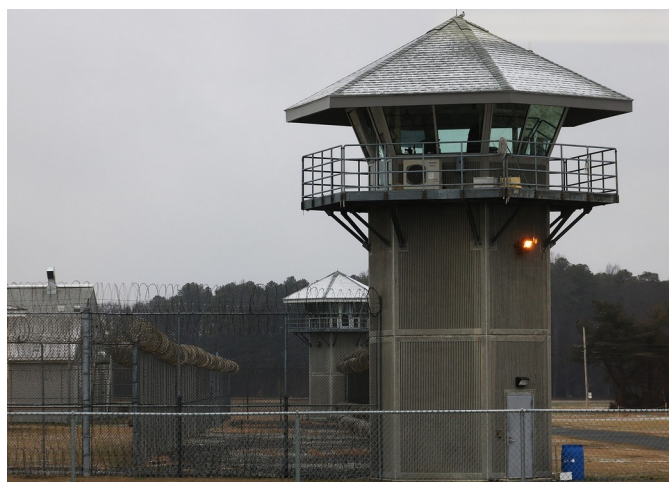


Photo: Joseph Fulgham, unsplash

The case of [Maysoon Majidi](#), an Iranian Kurdish woman, actress, director and activist who **is being persecuted by the Iranian regime**, is similarly dramatic. She initially fled to Iraq and Turkey, but as she feared being extradited to Iran, she left Turkey together with other people on board a sailing ship. In Calabria, Maysoon Majidi was **imprisoned on charges of smuggling people as a ‘scafista’** – again without access to documents in a language she understands. Her trial is pending before the court in Crotona.

**Since May 27, Maysoon Majidi has been on hunger strike in Castrovillari prison**. As a protest and call for help to finally be heard and protected from a regime that has put her on a banned list and from which she has fled. The hunger strike is an extreme

protest against the justice system in Crotona, which continues to disbelieve her story in an opaque judicial process.

The accusation was made based on two witnesses who were on board of the sailing boat and observed Maysoon bringing water to other refugees. The witnesses later denied that Maysoon was a 'scafista' and made accusations against those who interrogated her. The Kurdish woman was denied house arrest despite the intervention of several humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International and the initiatives of Italian and European parliamentarians.

The two Iranian women are not only united by the accusation of being 'scafiste', the persistence of the courts and the **lack of evidence**, but also by the fact that the Italian authorities ignore the **different languages of refugees and witnesses** – in this case Arabic and Farsi – and that there are no audio or video recordings of the interrogations to verify the statements.

Marjan Jamali and Maysoon Majidi are the only arrested women to receive significantly **more attention** than the many other cases of 'scafisti'.

In media reports, it can often be observed that the focus of reporting is on the survival of sexualized violence experienced by the women. The structural violence perpetrated by Italian authorities and courts is thus pushed into the background.

This is because this structural violence by the authorities affects numerous other people who are also imprisoned as "smugglers" and do not have sufficient access to their rights and about whom we regularly report in [this newsletter](#).

### Correction

In [Scirocco 10/2024](#), we reported on the **Ponte Galleria deportation prison in Rome**. For years, there has been calls for the closure of the CPR (Centri di permanenza per i rimpatri). Unfortunately, we were a little hasty, as the deportation prison in Rome **has not yet been closed**. Nevertheless, we hope that the numerous protests will bear fruit and that this inhumane administrative detention center will close its doors as soon as possible.

Further information on the situation in Italy can be found under "Projects" on our [homepage](#), in previous issues of [Scirocco](#) and in our spotlight "[Cosmos Palermo](#)".

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