

Italy

August 2019

The conversion into law of the **decree on security bis** was finally approved, tightening measures against vessels conducting rescue at sea and leading to the issuance of multiple

bans on entry into territorial waters against NGO rescue vessels. This resulted in various **stand-offs** over the disembarkation of individuals rescued at sea in the Central Mediterranean.

In August, **1,268 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea**, the highest number of monthly sea arrivals this year so far.

KEY INDICATORS

79%*

Percentage of 2019 sea arrivals informed by UNHCR staff upon disembarkation

5,148*

Referrals of **sea arrivals with specific needs** to appropriate services since January 2015

657*

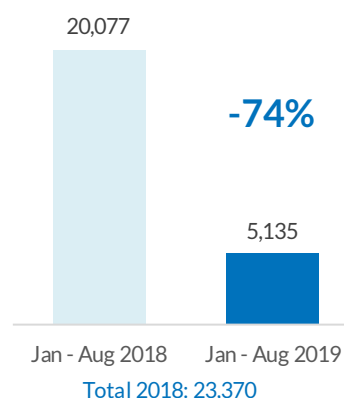
Monitoring **visits to reception and detention facilities** since April 2013

Between April 2013 and December 2016, monitoring visits were conducted jointly with Ministry of Interior, Prefectures, IOM, Save the Children, and Red Cross. Between April 2017 and April 2019, monitoring visits were conducted jointly with Ministry of Interior staff and independent auditors.

* Source: UNHCR

Sea Arrivals

Jan-Aug, 2018-2019

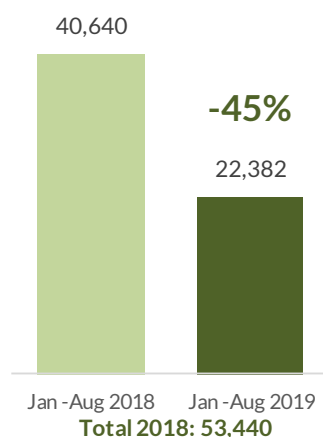


Source: Ministry of Interior

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Asylum applications

First time applications Jan-Aug 2018-2019

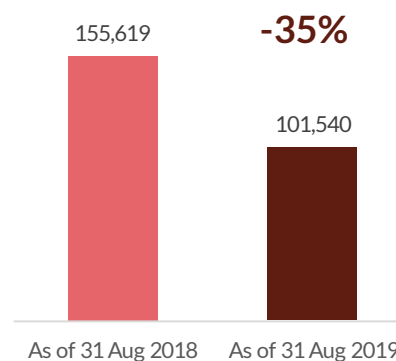


Source: Eurostat and Ministry of Interior

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Reception system

Population of concern in reception centres



Source: Ministry of Interior

Operational Context

- After the Chamber of Deputies' approval in late July, a confidence vote in Senate on 5 August confirmed the **law conversion of the so-called security law decree bis, tightening rules on rescue at sea operations**. The new law enables the Interior Ministry—together with Ministries of Defence and Transport—to ban entry, transit or stay of rescue vessels in Italian territorial waters, for public order reasons. Furthermore, in the event of a violation of the ban, Italian authorities are legitimized to fine rescue vessels operated by NGOs between €150,000 and €1,000,000, and to impound the vessels. Originally set up to €50,000, the maximum fine was increased during the discussions before the Chamber of Deputies. The law also allows the immediate arrest of persons who force entry into territorial waters. Upon signing the conversion law, the President of the Republic outlined some concerns, including the disproportionality between the sanction and the punished behaviour. In a [press release](#) issued on 6 August, UNHCR expressed concerns over the impact of new measures on rescue at sea.
- In August, implementation of the security law decree bis resulted in Italian authorities issuing multiple **bans on entry into territorial waters against NGO rescue vessels**. Notably, the Open Arms (Proactiva Open Arms), the Ocean Viking (SOS Méditerranée and MSF), the Mare Jonio (Mediterranea), the Eleonore (Mission Lifeline), and the Alan Kurdi (Sea Eye) were all served with entry bans during the month. UNHCR [called](#) on EU Member States to allow immediate disembarkation of rescued people. While the Ocean Viking and the Alan Kurdi eventually docked in Malta, individuals rescued by the other three NGOs disembarked in Italy following stand-offs causing significant delays between rescue and disembarkation. Such delays ranged from five days in the Mare Jonio case to just under three weeks in the Open Arms case. Notably, in the Open Arms case, disembarkation followed the intervention of the Agrigento Prosecutor. The Prosecutor eventually ordered the seizure of the vessel and the immediate disembarkation of rescued persons, taking into consideration the poor conditions on board and the psychological state of both rescued individuals and crew members. At the end of August, the Open Arms vessel was returned to the NGO by order of the Agrigento Tribunal, but remained subject to administrative seizure until some technical shortcomings identified by the Italian Coast Guard were addressed.

France, Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain accepted to receive over 100 adult refugees and migrants who disembarked the Open Arms vessel in August. The group was transferred from Lampedusa to the Pozzallo hotspot in mainland Sicily to undergo selection interviews.
- On 26 August, the Italian Civil Aviation Authority (ENAC) denied the use of Lampedusa airport to Moonbird, the reconnaissance plane run by the NGO Humanitarian Pilots Initiative. The decision followed a similar one issued against the aircraft Colibri, run by the NGO Pilotes Volontaires, earlier this year. It was justified with the fact that a specific authorization is required for these aircrafts to conduct their reconnaissance activities.

- In August, **1,268 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea**, the highest number of monthly sea arrivals this year so far. Notably, sea arrivals from disputed or delayed disembarkations following rescue by NGO vessels accounted for 29% of monthly sea arrivals, while 71% of those reaching shore in August arrived autonomously or following interception by Italian authorities in Italian territorial waters. Almost half of sea arrivals in August departed from Tunisia (48% of monthly sea arrivals), followed by Libya (20%), Turkey (15%), Algeria (14%), and Greece (4%). Sea arrivals reaching Italian shores in August mainly originated from Tunisia (36%), Algeria (15%), Pakistan (15%), Côte d'Ivoire (8%), and Iraq (5%).

Between 1 January and 31 August, 5,135 persons arrived in Italy by sea, a 74% decrease compared to the numbers of persons reaching Italian shores in the same period last year (20,077). Most refugees and migrants arriving by sea since the beginning of 2019 originated from Tunisia (26%), Pakistan (16%), Algeria (10%), Côte d'Ivoire (10%), Iraq (8%), Bangladesh (4%), Sudan (4%), Morocco (2%), Islamic Republic of Iran (2%), and Guinea (2%). For further information on sea arrivals in Italy, please refer to the [Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard – August 2019](#).

- In August, an average of 60 refugees and migrants arrived daily in Trieste, near the **Italy-Slovenia border**, many of whom are Syrian and Palestinian nationals who crossed over from Slovenia. In light of local reception facilities being at full capacity, transfers of asylum-seekers from Trieste to other regions continued to be reported. Italian and Slovenian NGOs are strengthening their coordination for border monitoring purposes.
- In August, **2,547 asylum applications** were lodged in Italy by applicants mainly originating from Pakistan, Nigeria, Peru, El Salvador, and Bangladesh. During the month, Territorial Commissions issued 7,043 decisions on individual cases, which were taken with the participation of UNHCR staff¹. On 5 August, the Ministry of the Interior issued a ministerial **decree** establishing border or transit areas where accelerated asylum procedures apply.
- As of 31 August, **101,540 asylum-seekers and refugees** were accommodated in **reception facilities** across Italy. As of 31 August, approximately 75% of them (76,042 persons) were accommodated in first-line reception facilities, predominantly located in Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, and Piedmont. An additional 25% (25,132 persons) were accommodated in second-line facilities belonging to the SIPROIMI network, most of which are located in Sicily, followed by Latium, and Apulia. Finally, as of 31 August, 366 persons were accommodated in hotspots, all of whom in Sicily.²
- After a political crisis leading to the fall of the previous Government, a new coalition was formed between the Democratic Party and the Five Stars Movement. At the end of August, Mr. Giuseppe Conte was entrusted to form a new Government

¹ Ministry of the Interior, *I numeri dell'asilo*, available at: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-dellasilo> (last access 15 October 2019)

² Ministry of the Interior, *Cruscotto statistico giornaliero*, 31 August 2019, available at: http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-08-2019.pdf (last access 9 October 2019)

Main Activities

Access to procedures

- UNHCR staff continued to regularly provide information to new sea arrivals, including individuals who are to be transferred to other European states following disembarkation in Italy. Information sessions focus on asylum and other relevant procedures, and UNHCR staff support the authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs, ensuring adequate referral to care providers.



An asylum-seeker tells a UNHCR staff member about the ordeal of her journey to Europe via Libya. Her group was rescued by the Open Arms vessel in August, after being stranded at sea for 20 days. They were finally allowed to disembark in Lampedusa.

- In August, UNHCR continued to follow-up on the transfers of individuals who disembarked in Italy and are expected to relocate to other European States in light of ad hoc agreements reached in connection with specific disembarkation events. UNHCR staff visited the group who disembarked the Open Arms vessel and was transferred to the Pozzallo hotspot awaiting interviews by receiving countries and subsequent transfer. At the same facility, UNHCR staff met with the group of refugees and migrants who disembarked the Italian Navy Gregoretti vessel in July and who awaited transfer to other European countries. In August, UNHCR staff also visited the Messina hotspot on a regular basis, following-up on refugees and migrants who await transfer after disembarking the Italian Navy Cigala Fulgosi vessel and the Sea Watch 3 vessel in May and June, respectively.

Reception and detention

- On 1 August, UNHCR carried out a monitoring visit to the pre-removal facility of Ponte Galeria, near Rome, after the recent re-opening of the facility's male sector. UNHCR raised concerns regarding the presence of relatively high numbers of asylum-seekers, as well as persons with specific needs, including vulnerable individuals who are not suitable for detention, and persons who do not have realistic prospects of repatriation.
- On 9 August, UNHCR staff visited the pre-removal facility in Turin. Approximately 24% of detainees there are asylum-seekers. A particular concern relates to the reduction in service provision, which is linked to the decrease in staff working hours as per the 2018 contract specifications. This has a disproportionately negative impact on persons with specific needs. While legislation prohibits the detention of vulnerable individuals, many remain at the Turin facility.

Community-based protection

- Through outreach activities and meetings with local authorities, UNHCR followed-up on the eviction of the ex-MOI occupied building in Turin, where considerable numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees resided. In particular, UNHCR liaised with relevant authorities in relation to persons with specific needs and individuals requiring specific support for integration purposes. In August, UNHCR staff also maintained close links with operational partners in the Metaponto area, in the southern region of Basilicata, following-up on the eviction of the Felandina informal settlement. Some 300-500 persons, mainly seasonal workers, were reported to live at the settlement, including asylum-seekers. UNHCR has advocated with relevant local authorities for a safe and non-violent eviction as well as for the identification of sustainable housing and integration solutions for evicted asylum-seekers and refugees, possibly by way of direct referral to the Italian reception system.
- In August, UNHCR provided assistance to 157 individuals who approached the office, including through its front desk, to receive information and assistance on a variety of issues, such as family reunification and marriage-related procedures. UNHCR was contacted either directly, or through lawyers, NGOs, institutional counterparts, or other UNHCR offices abroad. Front desk and individual counselling activities allow UNHCR staff to keep abreast of relevant issues impacting asylum-seekers and refugees' access to rights, such as difficulties in renewing permits of stay, informing their advocacy work with relevant authorities at local and national levels.

Child protection

- In August, UNHCR staff met with municipality representatives and the Ombudsperson in Palermo, in view of the forthcoming implementation of the "Viaggio in Italia tra i principi della CRC" project (A journey across Italy through the Convention on the Rights of the Child principles). The project aims at raising awareness on children's right to participation and at

strengthening inclusion opportunities by engaging Italian children and unaccompanied and separated children in Palermo, as well as in three other cities, namely Florence, Naples, and Turin. Children will discuss the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child while sharing their personal experiences. The project will take place in the framework of the ongoing partnership between UNHCR and the National Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents.

- UNHCR staff continued to provide support to the staff of AMIF-funded reception facilities for unaccompanied and separated children in Molise and Sicily. More specifically, UNHCR promoted the adoption of measures consistent with the best interests of the child principle, and called for adequate and timely information-sharing with staff of second-line reception facilities children are transferred to, so to ensure continuity of care.

External relations

- In August, a delegation of senior officials from the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina were on a study visit to Italy, with a view to observing Italy's management of mixed migration flows, as well as registration procedures, hotspots, identification of asylum-seekers, identification and referral of persons with specific needs, and the reception system. During the visit, the delegation, which was accompanied by UNHCR staff from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy, held meetings with Italian counterparts, including representatives from the Ministry of Interior's Public Security Department and the National Commission for the Right to Asylum. They also held a meeting with EASO staff in Rome, and visited reception facilities in Rome and Sicily. In Catania, the delegation also met with UNHCR partner LILA Catania, who is implementing a project on SGBV response and provision of services on sexually-transmitted diseases.

Working with Partners

- Since 2017, UNHCR has engaged in partnerships with a number of NGOs in Italy, with a view to enhancing its protection delivery, focusing in particular on SGBV prevention and response, child protection and integration. In 2019, partners include [AIDOS](#), [ARCI](#), [Cambalache](#), [Caritas \(Consortio Communitas\)](#), [Carta di Roma](#), [CIDAS](#), [Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati](#), [Di.RE](#), [Fondazione Adecco](#), [Intersos](#), [LILA Catania](#), [MEDU](#), and [University of Pollenzo](#). Further information is available on the [What we do in Italy](#) publication.



CONTACTS

Elisabetta Dolzan, Senior Reporting Assistant (Protection), Italy
dolzan@unhcr.org, Tel: +39 06 8021 2113

Guido Vittorio Di Gioacchino, Senior Data Management Assistant, Italy
digioacc@unhcr.org, Tel: +39 06 8021 2112

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