

# Italy

May 2019

As of 31 May 2019, **112,906 asylum-seekers** were accommodated in reception facilities across Italy. Approximately half of them were hosted in five regions.

In May, **782 refugees and migrants reached Italian shores**, the highest number of monthly sea arrivals in 2019 so far. Most sea arrivals in May departed from Libya.

On 30 May 2019, **149 asylum-seekers and refugees** were evacuated from Libya to Italy in a joint operation between UNHCR, and Italian and Libyan authorities.

## KEY INDICATORS

**71%\***

Percentage of 2019 sea arrivals informed by UNHCR staff upon disembarkation

**5,011\***

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

**621\***

Monitoring visits to reception facilities since April 2013

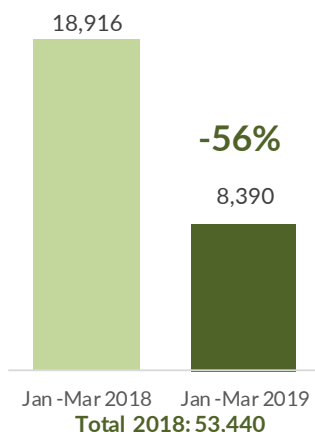
\* Source: UNHCR

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.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Asylum applications

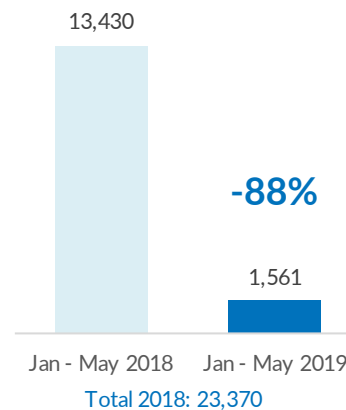
First time applications Jan-Mar 2018-2019



Source: Eurostat and Ministry of Interior

## Sea Arrivals

Jan-May, 2018-2019

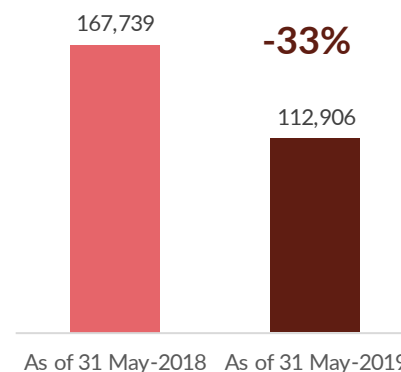


Source: Ministry of Interior

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Reception system

Population of concern in reception centres



Source: Ministry of Interior

## Operational Context

- As of 31 May, **112,906 asylum-seekers** were accommodated **in reception facilities** across Italy. This is a decrease of over 5,000 persons compared to the end of the previous month. Approximately half of the asylum-seekers in reception facilities are hosted in five Italian regions (Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Latium, Piedmont, and Campania).<sup>1</sup>
- According to the latest available data, in the 1 January – 31 March 2019 period, there were 8,390 new asylum applications in Italy. First-time claimants more commonly originated from Pakistan, Ukraine, El Salvador, Peru, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Albania, Morocco, Nigeria, and Senegal. This reflects a significant increase of asylum-seekers from Latin American countries, compared to previous years. In the first three months of 2019, Territorial Commissions in Italy decided on 21,620 asylum applications: **10 per cent** of applicants were recognized as **refugees**, while **6 per cent** were granted **subsidiary protection**. Approximately 2 per cent of asylum-seekers were granted a complementary form of protection, while 82 per cent of applications were rejected.<sup>2</sup>
- On 30 May, **149 vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees were evacuated from Libya to Italy**. The group comprised 126 Eritreans, 14 Somalis, seven Sudanese, and two Ethiopians. Notably, 65 children were among the evacuees, of whom 48 were unaccompanied. The group were moved from UNHCR's Gathering and Departure Facility in Tripoli, after surviving months in dire conditions inside detention centres in other parts of the city. The evacuation was carried out in collaboration with Libyan and Italian authorities. For further information, please refer to UNHCR's [press release](#).



Refugees reach safety after evacuation from Tripoli to Italy on 30 May 2019. Pictured is Djamila with her two children, Mohamed, 3, and Nousra, 8 months, who reached safety in Rome after nearly two years in a Libyan detention centre.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of the Interior, *Cruscotto statistico giornaliero*, 31 May 2019, available at: [http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto\\_statistico\\_giornaliero\\_31-05-2019\\_0.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-05-2019_0.pdf) (last access 21 June 2019)

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat, *First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex Quarterly data (rounded)*, last update 13 June 2019, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asydcfstq&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asydcfstq&lang=en) (last access 21 June 2019)

- In May, **782 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea**. This is the highest number of monthly sea arrivals in 2019 so far. It is also at par with the number of total sea arrivals in the first four months of the year. The vast majority of persons reaching Italian shores in May (42 per cent of monthly sea arrivals) departed from Libya, followed by Turkey (25 per cent of monthly sea arrivals), Algeria (13 per cent), Tunisia (12 per cent), and Greece (8 per cent). This is a significant shift compared to the previous month, when there were no arrivals by sea of individuals departing from Libya. New arrivals who departed from Libya in May mainly originate from sub-Saharan African countries and Bangladesh. New arrivals who departed from Greece and Turkey are mainly ethnic Kurds from Iraq and Pakistani nationals. Between 1 January and 31 May, 1,561 persons arrived in Italy by sea, an 88 per cent decrease compared to the numbers of persons reaching Italian shores in the same period last year (13,430). Most refugees and migrants arriving by sea since the beginning of 2019 originated from Tunisia (22 per cent), Pakistan (15 per cent), Algeria (13 per cent), Iraq (11 per cent), Bangladesh (9 per cent), Côte d'Ivoire (4 per cent), Egypt (3 per cent), Sudan (2 per cent), Guinea (2 per cent), and Morocco (2 per cent). For further information on sea arrivals in Italy, please refer to the [Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard – May 2019](#).
- Various **SAR operations** were conducted in the Central Mediterranean in May, including by NGOs and national authorities. During the month, two NGO vessels were operational in the area, namely the Mare Jonio and the Sea Watch 3. Both vessels were subjected to restrictions in May, preventing them from continuing to carry out their rescue activities in a regular manner. On 9 May, the Mare Jonio rescued 27 refugees and migrants who had departed from the Libyan town of Zawiya. The NGO vessel sailed towards Italy and was eventually escorted by the Italian Tax and Customs Police into Lampedusa, where rescued individuals disembarked on 10 May. The Mare Jonio was seized following disembarkation, while the crew were placed under investigation for aiding and abetting illegal immigration. However, on 14 May, judicial authorities in Agrigento overturned the decision to seize the vessel. In mid-May, the Sea Watch 3 also rescued 65 persons some 30 miles off the Libyan coast. Despite statements by the Italian Interior Minister that Italian ports would be closed, the Agrigento Prosecutor eventually ordered the impounding of the vessel and the disembarkation of persons on board in Lampedusa. The vessel's captain was, however, placed under investigations in connection with allegations of abetting illegal immigration. The Sea Watch 3 had resumed its activities in early May, following the announcement that, according to a Dutch court, the new Dutch regulations that had prevented the vessel from conducting rescue operations in the previous weeks, could not be enforced without a transitional period.

Notably, in early May, 36 refugees and migrants who had departed from Al Khums, Libya, were rescued by the Italian Navy vessel Cigala Fulgosi. Despite statements by the Italian Interior Minister that the group would not be allowed disembarkation in Italy, rescued individuals were eventually transferred to another Navy vessel and disembarked in the Italian harbor of Augusta following a relocation agreement with France, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, and Portugal. UNHCR had [advocated](#) with Italian authorities for prompt disembarkation of the group in Italy, reiterating that Libya is not a safe country and

therefore no return there can take place in accordance with international law. Furthermore, the Cigala Fulgosi vessel carried out another rescue operation at the end of May, bringing 100 refugees and migrants to safety. Rescued individuals eventually disembarked in Genova on 2 June; they are also expected to relocate to other European States.

- On 15 May, the **Catania Tribunal dismissed the investigation** that had been opened **against** the captain and the head of mission of the NGO vessel **Proactiva Open Arms**. It consequently decided not to press charges against them for conspiracy aimed at abetting illegal immigration, in relation to a disembarkation of over 200 refugees and migrants occurred in Pozzallo on 18 March 2018. Investigations will, however, proceed in relation to allegations of abetting illegal immigration and duress, in connection with the crew's alleged failure to hand over rescued individuals to the Libyan authorities, and in connection with its consequent sailing towards Italy despite the vessel's closer proximity to Malta.
- In May, **regular land arrivals** were reported **on the Italy-Slovenia border** near Trieste, in northern Italy. New arrivals predominantly originate from Pakistan and Afghanistan, and travelled through various south-eastern European countries. They also include unaccompanied children.
- On 3 May, the Italian Bishops Conference and Comunità di Sant'Egidio signed a protocol with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with Caritas and Migrantes Foundation, which will enable 600 individuals to reach Italy through **humanitarian corridors from Ethiopia, Jordan, and Niger**, in the next two years.
- During the reporting period, the First Section of the **Court of Cassation** requested that the Court's Plenary assess whether the repeal of humanitarian protection, introduced by the Law on Migration and Security (Law 132/2018), is retroactive. The judges of the First Section disagreed with an earlier decision taken in February 2019, according to which asylum applications lodged prior to the coming into force of the new Law on 5 October 2018 ought to be determined on the basis of the previous legal framework.
- During the reporting period, the Genova tribunal ruled that documents attesting the lodging of an asylum application constitute sufficient evidence of the individual's regular stay in Italy, enabling asylum-seekers to enroll in the **civil registry** of the town they live in. This ruling is consistent with other decisions taken by courts in Bologna and Firenze. Furthermore, in Messina, the Municipal Council passed a resolution establishing an ad hoc civil registry allowing the enrolment of asylum-seekers residing there.
- NGOs CIR (Italian Council for Refugees) and A Buon Diritto brought two cases before the Rome Tribunal **challenging** the decisions by the capital's Provincial Police Headquarters not to renew permits of stay to beneficiaries of international protection who do not have a permanent address, thus preventing them from accessing services.

## Main Activities

### Access to procedures

- In May, UNHCR staff provided new sea arrivals with information on asylum and other relevant procedures, either by attending disembarkations at the port or by following-up with ad hoc information sessions in reception facilities accommodating recent arrivals. UNHCR staff also followed-up on the transfers of individuals who, following disembarkation in Italy, are expected to relocate to other European States in light of ad hoc agreements reached in connection with specific disembarkation events. UNHCR regularly visited the 25 individuals who disembarked the Cigala Fulgosi vessel in early May, and who have since been accommodated at the Messina hotspot, having undertaken interviews and awaiting transfer to France, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, and Portugal. Notably, in May, six Eritrean nationals who disembarked from Italian Tax and Customs Police vessels in mid-July 2018 were finally transferred to Germany. A total of 450 refugees and migrants had disembarked the above vessels in mid-July 2018, of whom 130 were transferred to other European countries in the second half of 2018.
- In May, UNHCR staff visited a reception facility near Rome meeting with recent evacuees from Libya, discussing challenges they face and providing them with relevant information. UNHCR also specifically followed-up on a group of unaccompanied children who were evacuated from Libya to Italy at the end of April 2019, and who were transferred to various reception facilities. UNHCR provided support to facilities staff and carried out a participative informative session with a group of evacuated children in a first-line reception facility.



UNHCR staff keep two children entertained in a waiting area at Pratica di Mare military airbase near Rome, after they were evacuated with their mother from Libya on 30 May 2019.

- In northern Italy, UNHCR liaised with local authorities to ensure that asylum-seekers arriving via the land borders with Slovenia are given access to territory and procedures, as well as to reception. Difficulties in accessing reception were reported as many local facilities were at full capacity.

### Protection outreach

- In May, UNHCR staff conducted outreach and protection monitoring activities in various urban locations in Milan, where staff met with persons of concern – including from the Middle East and northern Africa - who travelled through South-East Europe and crossed via land into Italy. Staff also met with Dublin returnees who were sleeping in informal settlements in the city, and with beneficiaries of international protection who reported difficulties in renewing their residence permits due to their inability to provide authorities with evidence of a permanent address. UNHCR provided persons of concern with information on asylum related procedures and relevant rights connected with their status.

### Community-based protection

- In the context of the joint UNHCR-Intersos [PartecipAzione programme](#), 16 organizations were selected to take part in the programme's capacity-building and training activities, which will take place in the course of 2019 (click [here](#) for the list of the selected organizations).
- On 7 May, UNHCR staff facilitated a focus group discussion with a group of Venezuelan nationals in Milan, covering a variety of issues of relevance for asylum-seekers, including access to territory and asylum procedures, as well as to information, reception, and health services. The initiative also allowed to better understand protection needs and community-based protection mechanisms within the Venezuelan community.
- On 22 May, UNHCR facilitated an informative session for refugee women accessing the Safe Space at the Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre in Rome. The session covered access to procedures in Italy, the refugee status determination procedure, the Dublin Regulation, as well as residence registration and recent developments. Attendees originate from Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Somalia.

### Sexual and gender-based violence

- On 1 May, UNHCR signed its renewed partnership with [D.i.Re.](#), the Italian network of anti-violence centres. The project, "Leaving violence. Living safe", seeks to provide improved and meaningful access to anti-violence centres and other key services for refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls who have survived sexual and gender-based violence, aiming at improved capacity of D.i.RE. centres and improved coordination with other relevant actors.

- In the context of the UNHCR-LILA [Catania](#) partnership, a protocol was signed for the referral of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to the local branch of the public health system. Furthermore, LILA started delivering sexual and reproductive health services in the rural informal settlement of Cassibile. In May, UNHCR and LILA also co-delivered two training sessions to over 30 service providers in Sicily, focusing on access to health for asylum-seekers and refugees, and the link between cultural anthropology and the response to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.
- In May, UNHCR staff also delivered two capacity-development sessions addressed to some 80 medical and psycho-social professionals working at the Enna local health authority, focusing on access to health for persons with specific needs and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.
- UNHCR finalized a set of information tools to promote the establishment of referral pathways and awareness among professionals working with refugees and migrants. The tools include an information factsheet on access to sexual and reproductive health services; a factsheet on access to health services, and a factsheet for access to social services. These tools will be used during training activities with public and private service providers and reception facilities staff. Furthermore, UNHCR consolidated the findings of a mapping of good practices for the identification, referral and longer term protection response for persons with specific needs across 12 Italian regions.

### External relations

- On the occasion of the 58<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, UNHCR launched “Rothko in Lampedusa”, a project running from May to November 2019, aimed at highlighting the importance of art as a means to enable refugees to express their talent and benefit host communities. Projects by eight contemporary artists – including Ai Weiwei – who have either been refugees or worked on the refugee experience are on display at Palazzo Querini together with those of five emerging refugee artists, who also undertook an art residency in Venice. For the first week, the artists-in-residence were accommodated by local families belonging to the Refugees Welcome network. On 9 May, the performance-installation “[Dress For Our Time](#)” took place in Venice, starring supermodel Bianca Balti wearing a dress made from a UNHCR tent previously used in the Zaatari refugee camp. The event was part of a series of initiatives linked to “Rothko in Lampedusa” that will take place in Venice throughout the duration of the project. For further information, please refer to the project [website](#) and to UNHCR’s [press release](#) and [web-story](#).
- On 23 May, the UNHCR Deputy Regional Representative for Southern Europe delivered a presentation before the Italian Ministry of Affairs’ Joint Committee for Development Cooperation, at the presence of the Deputy Minister Emanuela Del Re. The presentation focused on the situation and challenges in Libya and Niger, and on the main global challenges, growing needs and possible responses, as well as on the Global Compact on Refugees. The Deputy Minister expressed hope that the critical situation of persons of

concern detained in Libya can be addressed through humanitarian corridors, in the context of collaboration and solidarity at European level (see the Ministry of Affairs' [press release](#)).

- On 3 May, UNHCR spoke at *Set them free!* at Macro Asilo in Rome, a roundtable discussion with representatives from Amnesty International, Mediterranean Hope, MEDU, ARCI, MSF, Mediterranea, and Forum per Cambiare l'Ordine delle Cose. On 8 May, together with Nuha Saegh, a Syrian refugee and Pollenzo University graduate, UNHCR attended *Seeds&Chips - The Global Food Innovation Summit* in Milan, speaking about UNHCR's mandate, its partnership with the University, the relevance of studying gastronomy, the need to change our food system when we move to a new place, and culture as a means of integrating into the new society. Furthermore, UNHCR spoke on intercultural dialogue during the event *Rotte Mediterranee* in Scicli, and attended a hate crimes workshop organised by the University of Brescia. In May, the book *Anche Superman era un rifugiato* was presented twice, in Venice with Mohamed Keita, and at the Rome Comics Festival.



Refugee artists-in-residence (left to right) Majid Adin, 40, from Iran, Bnar Sardar Sidiq, 35, from Iraq, Mohamed Keita, 25, from Ivory Coast, and Rasha Deeb, 30, from Syria, come together at a UNHCR-sponsored workshop to produce a joint artwork ahead of the 'Rothko in Lampedusa' exhibition challenging stereotypes about refugees.



- In late May, UNHCR led journalists Angela Caponnetto (Rainews), Annalisa Camilli (Internazionale), Irene Savio (El Periodico) and Esma Cakir (Turkish correspondent based in Italy) on mission to Niger, focusing on the importance of evacuating vulnerable refugees from Libya via the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niamey and conditions in Agadez.
- On 31 May UNHCR announced the winner of the competition to produce a video inspired by 'Viaggi da Imparare', a project for schools developed in recent years. The winner was *I passi dell'accoglienza*, a video produced by students in classes I-V at the Istituto G. Gentile in Caltagirone, Sicily. All videos participating in the competition are available on a dedicated [website](#).



Supermodel Bianca Balti dons a UNHCR tent that was previously used in the Zaatari refugee camp in the performance-installation "Dress Four Our Time" on 9 May in Venice.

## 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 [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.



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