

Report on Xenophobia, Racism & Rise of the Far-Right in ITALY

Year: 2017

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Introduction

At the moment of writing the current report, Italy is experiencing a coalition government made by *Lega* (League) and *Movimento 5 Stelle* (Five Stars Movement) which indicates a populist-ultranationalist government. The unusual government's structure sees a third person-aside of the two leaders of the winnings parties- as the unknown and un-elected academic Prof. Giuseppe Conte, although in matter of fact, it seems that the newly appointed Interior minister Matteo Salvini (Lega party) is effectively acting as prime minister instead. These are still early days and it will be interesting to analyse the socio-political dynamics experienced by the Italians in one year time from now. In 2017, however, Italy has seen a worsening of the public opinion in matter of prejudice, discrimination and xenophobic attitude concerning religious, ethnic minorities and more in general, against any form of diversity from homosexuality to veganism.

The analysis of the data and material gathered for the present report, leads to a couple of conclusions that will be better articulated in the final part of this document. However, it can be anticipated that while the official political institutions have attempted to sooth the mistakes and open violations of human rights recorded in 2017 and in the previous years-succeeding only partially-, on a social level instead, the degree of hate crime, hate speech and discrimination against minorities has instead augmented systematically creating thus far more divide between the autochthon population and the ethnic and religious minorities living already or arriving on the territory, alongside open glorification of fascism as it will better illustrated in the present report.

The increased level of intolerance by the population against immigrants or Roma-Sinti gypsies has become a worrying trademark of the mainstream popular feelings against everything that is perceived as "foreign". Such deterioration of the specific democratic principles and values as tolerance, respect of the diverse and readiness to welcome the stranger, has left the place to intolerance, racial hate and a form of tribalism detected also in other western democracies that

can be summarised in the slogan “Italian first” as the secretary of the *Lega* party, Matteo Salvini, has been stating repeatedly since the electoral campaign started in the spring of 2017.

The mutated socio-political climate in 2017, culminated in the electoral results of March 2018 providing the portrait of a country oftentimes abandoned or betrayed by its political representatives and therefore, shifting to the more reassuring slogans of populist and ultranationalist parties like the *Lega* and the *Movimento 5 Stelle*, major protagonists of the Italian politics in the last two years. The success of those two parties- and also on a local level by openly neo-Nazi parties- shows a disenfranchising of the average voter from the more democratic and left-leaning parties like the PD (Democratic party), which collapsed ruinously in the 2018 general election and shows also the disenchantment of the average Italian voter for the official politics and the authority represented by this government party. The other element in fact that needs to be taken into consideration, is the anti-establishment feeling that has been growing within the Italian population and the creation or, better to say, the re-enforcement of some evergreen escape goats like for instance, the immigrants or, more in general, the religious and ethnic minorities present on the territory.

The level of hate speech and, consequently, of hate crime has become a constant trademark in the 2017 socio-political dynamics of Italy as this report will attempt to illustrate and analyse. To such level of intolerance and racial and discriminatory prejudice has contributed heavily the Italian media and system of information, which feed the Italian public opinion of partial and biased news and oftentimes use a type of language that can be easily misunderstood if the viewer is not in possess of the right intellectual tools to de-codify appropriately the message broadcasted. In addition, Italians use very often social platforms like Twitter or FaceBook, which have become proper information tools often feeding the general public with fake news on immigration and immigrants. The rising populist and ultra-nationalist political parties do know this and have been using consistently the media and the social media in particular for their propaganda purposes. The result has been a general disinformation and a rising racism and intolerance detected in the Italian population.

The 2017 report on Italy could help to better understand the current events happening in the country at the time of writing (2018) as there have been detected already all the signs and elements that see Italy on the path of becoming a new Orban’s Hungary.

The present report will analyse and assess several areas for the year 2017. It will be structured as follows: section 1 will analyse and explain the legislation in matter of minorities; section 2 will look the law enforcement of point 1; section 3 will analyse and assess all manifestations of xenophobia and hate speech among the executive and the legislative powers; section 4 will instead look at statements against xenophobia and radical nationalism among government representatives and prominent political activists; section 5 will assess the position of immigrants in the period in question looking at advancement in immigration laws and their enforcement, anti-immigration sentiments present in the country and social support available for immigrants; section 6 will analyse the Italian society's attitude towards immigrants, foreign nationals and ethnic minorities by taking into consideration surveys and how the activity of political parties, the media and NGOs' engagement with immigrants and minorities has changed overall the Italian public opinion's on this category of people present on the territory.

In section 7 will be analysed and assessed the incitement to religious and ethnic hatred and how widespread is on the territory; in section 8 will be analysed the presence of radical nationalist parties and movements and how effective their preaching is and it will be assessed the presence of neo-Nazi groups both at a central and local level on the territory; in section 9 it will be analysed the action of extremists and ultra-nationalists; in section 10 will be analysed the hate crime statistics and cases occurred in Italy in the period indicated (2017) thanks to the analysis of data provided by official authorities and well as by well accredited NGOs; in section 11 will be assessed the glorification of Nazism and Holocaust denial; finally, in section 12 will be assessed the level of danger and threat that Human Rights activists might have suffered in the period of time taken into consideration. The overall report will end with two sections: an evaluative conclusion of the material analysed and assessed for the present report and some recommendations provided by the author.

1. Legislation

In the year 2017 there have been few changes in the current legislation regarding minorities living on the Italian territory. However, the major problem for the Italian authorities still remains the immigrants and refugees or asylum seekers that land regularly on the Italian shores of Sicily, Puglia and Calabria regions. In this regard, the Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni has supported a law that takes the name of the Interior Minister Marco Minniti and the minister of Justice Andrea Orlando, which has been presented by the government in February 2017 and

approved on 11 April 2017 with a previous approval by the Senate on 29 March.¹ This law, that from now onward will be known as the “Minniti- Orlando Law”² deals mainly with the procedure of acceptance and expulsion of illegal immigrants found or arriving on Italian soil. Such law was considered necessary in order to accelerate the bureaucracy dealing with asylum applications and their appeals against a possible rejection by the Italian courts. It must be said also that the number of these appeals has increased in the year 2017 and have made the life of tribunals quite difficult. The aim of this law though, is also to augment the number of expulsions of irregular immigrants living in Italy.

The main points of this law are four and these are:

- 1) Abolition of the second degree of appeal for those asylum seekers that have appealed against the rejection of their asylum application.
- 2) Abolition of court hearing for the asylum applicants
- 3) Extending the network of detention centres for irregular immigrants
- 4) Introduction of volunteer work for immigrants.³

One of the main innovation of this law concerns the creation of a court hearing where the asylum applicant will not be necessarily present in person in the court hall but the magistrate can vision a videotape of the asylum applicant before the so called “territorial committee” (a committee made by the local legislative authorities where the asylum seeker is residing). The issue with this type of court hearing is that the judge can take decisions without the possibility of asking specific questions to the asylum applicant and listen from him/her directly his/her reasons for appealing.

The “Minniti-Orlando” law implies also an extension of the immigration detention centres for the immediate deportation of those immigrants who are not found fit for being granted the right to stay. The so-called CIE (Centre of Identification and Expulsion) will be called instead CPR (Permanent Centre for the Deportation). The number of those centres will go from four to twenty, one in each Italian region for a total of 1.600 places. These measures have risen the doubts and perplexities of many NGOs, charities and Human Rights organisations but the Interior minister Minniti has assured them saying that each of these centres will have a maximum of 100 places, being therefore smaller and far from urban areas and cities and closer

¹<https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/04/12/decreto-minniti-orlando-legge> ; Cf. <https://www.immigrazione.biz/normative-php>

²From the names of the two ministers who have promoted the bill in the Parliament: Marco Minniti (Minister of the Interior) and Andrea Orlando (Minister of Justice).

³Decreto Minniti-Orlando 17/02/2017, n. 13, G.U.in Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 90, 8 April 2017.

to airports thus to facilitate the deportation process. On the day of its approval in the Parliament, many associations, NGOs, trade unions and left-wing parties have protested against the new law that was found as a violation of people's fundamental rights and perceived as the desire of the government to accelerate and augment the number of deportations of illegal immigrants present on the territory. What many opponents to this law have pointed out is the effort by the Italian authorities to associate the issue of immigration with the issue of security; this association can in matter of fact, give the way to a xenophobic and racist perception of immigrants arriving in Italy. But this is not the only criticism that the "Minniti-Orlando" law has risen. There is also the criticism of the social workers that operate in those centres who affirmed that this new law would make them more as guards and thus undermine the relationship based on trust that they manage to establish with the detainees.⁴

This law has also found criticism by law experts who have affirmed that it is not in line with the Italian constitution and with the European convention on Human Rights. In particular, the jurists noticed that the "video-trial" is against the article 111 of the Italian constitution, which establishes the right to a just trial and against article 24 of the Italian constitution (right to defence).⁵ But also against article 6 of the Human Rights European Convention, which establishes the right to have a contradictory in court.⁶ On this point, the Italian Association of Law Studies on immigration (Associazione Italiana Studi Giuridici) has stated that such court procedure can be applied only in a situation of emergency and not, as the "Minniti-Orlando" law states, after 180 days the asylum seeker has been detained in one of those centres.⁷ In addition, such "video-trials" collide also with the European Law on this matter, as the article 46-32/2013 states.⁸

On this issue, the Justice minister Orlando wished to assure that the magistrate can also arrange a court hearing with the presence in person of the asylum seeker but this aspect can stress even more the discretionary character of the "Minniti-Orlando" law.⁹

⁴Ibid. Annalisa Camilli: <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/04/12/decreto-minniti-orlando-legge>

⁵[https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione_inglese.pdf](https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf)

⁶Council of Europe-Court of Human Rights, *European Convention of Human Rights*, 1998.

⁷<https://www.asgi.it/?s=decreto+minniti+orlando&submit=Cerca> 30/06/2017

⁸FRA, Handbook on *European Law Relating to Asylum, Borders and Immigration* (Luxemburg: European Union, 2013).

⁹Ibid. <https://www.asgi.it/?s=decreto+minniti+orlando&submit=Cerca> 30/06/2017.

Regarding instead the legislation concerning the working and living rights of foreign workers in Italy, until middle 1980s, the legislation still widely used went back to the Fascist period even if this went against the article 10, clause 2 of the post-war Italian constitution.¹⁰ The first piece of legislation that affects the rights of foreign workers in Italy goes back to 1986 (law number 943) and was only looking at emergency situations rather than to systematic and permanent residence of the foreign workers.¹¹ It is necessary to wait until 1990 and the “Martelli” law before in Italy foreign workers could enjoy a specific legislation that can regulate their labour offer and working contract legally. The “Martelli” law introduced also for the first time laws that would deal with the social issues that foreign minorities living in Italy would experience.¹² Finally, it is with the “Napolitano-Turco” in 1998 that we have a further improvement of the “Martelli” law and that is, with few amendments, still is the legal framework for foreigners living and working in Italy.¹³ The current legislation on the rights of foreign workers is still based on the system of established quotas of skilled and unskilled non-European workers based on the demand-offer scheme that has been facilitated by the sponsor system: the foreign worker can then come legally into the country if he/she has been called by a potential employer from Italy.

Furthermore, the “Napolitano-Turco” has also allowed the family members of the foreigner legally living in the country to join him/her with a regular visa. The “Napolitano-Turco” contemplates that the foreign worker legally living and working in the country can and has to be assimilated to the Italian citizen in matter of working and civil rights. However, part of the current system that regulates the minorities and foreign workers living in the country legally, has also been the “Bossi-Fini” law on immigration issued in 2002.¹⁴ The “Bossi-Fini” resents of the political and ideological inclinations of the two politicians that designed the immigration law being party leader of the populist and ultra-nationalist *Lega* (Umberto Bossi) and party leader of the neo-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale* (Gianfranco Fini).

The overall legislation on the rights of foreign workers in Italy is therefore based on previous legislations that regulate mainly those who arrive in the country with a regular visa. To those people is granted same social and civil rights of the native population. The major problem starts

¹⁰Ibid. https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf

¹¹<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1987/01/12/086U0943/sg>

¹²https://www.unhcr.it/wp-content/uploads/.../Legge_Martelli.pdf.

¹³<https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/98401.htm>

¹⁴<https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/02189.htm>

instead for those who arrive illegally in the country and on this purpose the “Bossi-Fini” has been replaced by an even more strict legislation on the matter in 2017, which is the “Minniti-Orlando”. This latest piece of legislation tends to limit the number of illegal immigrants or refugees arriving on the Italian shores and the agreement made by the Gentiloni government with Libya in 2017, has meant less migrants arriving but also reports of heavy violation of human rights by the Libyan counterpart.¹⁵ Furthermore, the legislation regarding the naturalization of foreign children born in Italy (the *ius soli* law) has not passed the Parliament vote and finds still opposition in the majority of the electorate.¹⁶

The Italian legislation though, recognises the rights of the historical and linguistic minorities present on the territory (law n.482/1999) and also their right to profess any other religious creed outside Catholicism. However, religious and ethnic minorities have found problems in enjoying this legislation on minorities rights with special reference to the Roma gypsy communities and the Muslim community. In reference to the Roma-Sinti gypsies, the Roma communities’ representatives have presented in 2017 a law proposal (bill) in order to be recognised as linguistic minorities (articles 3 and 6 of the Italian constitution) so to avoid in future the discrimination and racism that are now experiencing as minority present on the territory, but at the moment of the writing, the law proposal is still being discussed by the authorities.¹⁷ The other religious and ethnic minority that suffered from legal discrimination in 2017 is the Muslim minority. The “Bossi-Fini” immigration law (2002) had introduced the “local committee” which should legislate on local issues alongside the local regional authorities.

Therefore, if at national level the law protects the rights of the minorities, at regional level these rights are at the discretion of the local authorities and the “local committee”. The minority mostly affected is the Muslim minority as the Italian authorities (both local and regional) have associated immigration with security issues and in particular, have associated the Muslim communities present on the territory with terrorism and radicalism. In 2017, there have been several cases of discrimination by the authorities on the Muslim minority especially in the northern regions like Veneto, Piemonte or Lombardia where the regional and local authorities are dominated by the *Lega*. In the Veneto region in 2017 we have the following decree: to

¹⁵<https://www.affarinternazionali.it/2017/12/migranti-italia-diritti/libia>

¹⁶<https://www.ilpost.it/2017/12/24/ius-soli-numero-legale/>

¹⁷<https://www.lexsintirom.blogspot.com/p/la-legge.html>

forbid to wear in public clothing that may make difficult to recognise those who are wearing it. This has been made known by the media as the “anti-burqa law” and is however a modification of a law already existing since 1975 referring to the use of the full-face helmet.¹⁸ In the north-west region of Liguria is instead forbidden the use of the burqa in hospitals, although the motivation given by the local authorities for this law was to better help the Muslim women to emancipate themselves and to become westernised, it has been perceived by many as discriminatory against the Muslim community.¹⁹

Again, in the Veneto region has been passed a local law that forbid the building of mosques with the reason that this type of buildings ruins the landscape and the ancient and historical architecture of the cities and towns of the region.²⁰ On a national level, the minister of the Interior, Marco Minniti has imposed by law to the Muslim communities to use only the Italian language in the Mosque.²¹ In 2017 there has also been a law proposal by the MP Emanuele Fiano on making a criminal offence the propaganda of fascism and Nazism (introducing the article 293 bis to the criminal law). The Fiano’s decree was initially approved by the Chamber of Deputies in September 2017, but later in December of the same year was dismissed by the Senate.²² The “Fiano Law” came to improve the already existing legislation on hate crime and hate speech known as the “Mancino law” (n.203, 1993), which has many flaws as for instance do not to take into consideration crime linked to homophobia or the LGBT’s rights.

But as already said above, the “Fiano Law” although being approved in first instance in the September of 2017, was later abandoned in the December of the same year due to reasons that imply the freedom of expression but also for the changed climate in Italian politics, which saw increased popularity of the far-right and populist political parties and therefore, did not pass to the next stage in the Senate.²³

2. Law enforcement practices affecting minorities

¹⁸<https://www.veronasera.it/politica/veneto-approva-provvedimento-anti-burqa-1-febbraio-2017.html>

¹⁹<https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/islam-stretta-liguria-ospedale-vietato-burqa-1372432/>

²⁰<https://www.difesadelpopolo.it/Archivio/Attualita/Legge-anti-moschea-la-vittoria-del-veneto-sul-governo>
08/04/2017

²¹https://www.Users/Anna/Downloads/4_2017_Caselli_Loi_Strozza.pdf ; Cf.: *Rivista n.4/2017 Associazione Italiana Costituzionalisti (AIC)*, 26/11/2017.

²²<https://www.camera.it/leg17/126?idDocumento=3343>

²³<https://www.giornalettismo.com/archives/2644829/legge-fiano-morta>

The law enforcement practices affecting minorities living on Italian soil are reflecting the changing political climate and also a different attitude toward them by the local authorities. It should be remembered that due to the socio-political asset of the country, law enforcement practices vary according the regional or local legislation and authorities, and according to the political forces predominant in that specific territory that have the capability to legislate locally. The minority much affected by those legal practices are foreigners and their ethnic communities of reference, rather than the historical minorities recognised in their rights by the legislation (see point 1 of the present report). The Gipsies communities (Roma, Sinti and Caminanti) do not fall in the latter category but are assimilated by the Italian legislation on this matter, to the foreigners' communities and treated accordingly.

It occurred to many Italian and international NGOs²⁴ that the law enforcement issued in 2017 on un-accompanied minor immigrants (Law n.47/2017) had some points to be discussed with the Italian authorities as the Italian chamber of Deputies with a meeting these organisations held on 7 November 2017. In this meeting with the Italian authorities few points emerged that need to be addressed in order to correct some practices and eliminate any forms of discrimination and by protecting the rights of the minors landing in Italy.

The points to be improved were the following:

- 1) better support to be provided to the volunteer families that were welcoming the minor into their homes
- 2) police forces need to adopt more suitable and better standard procedures when dealing and identifying minors arriving un-accompanied to Italy.
- 3) to speed up the procedure for the minor to apply for asylum status to the *Questura* (police headquarters) of the territory of reference
- 4) to standardise the minor employment norms
- 5) the CPR accommodation for minors should be considered only as an emergency as the minor should avoid this type of accommodation, which is not suitable for children.
- 6) easy access to medical and legal aid
- 7) the minor should be informed officially of his/her rights and duties once on Italian soil
- 8) to have legal representative as the same law on the matter (law n.47/2017) requires.

²⁴The NGOs involved in this meeting were the following: Action Aid, Ai.Bi., Amnesty International Italia, ASGI, Caritas Italiana, Centro Astalli, C.I.R., CNCA, Emergency, OIM, Terres des Hommes, Save the Children, UNHCR and UNICEF.

The number of un-accompanied minors in Italy in the period monitored for this report has been estimated by 18.303 (17.056 male and 1.247 female) according to the official data provided by the Italian Ministry of Labour and of Social Policies (December 2017).²⁵ As the reader can easily detect from this series of recommendations by these NGOS, the law enforcement practices regarding the un-accompanied minors need a better application and major sensitivity by the Italian authorities. The situation of the immigration centres and the overall immigration law enforcement practices is quite discriminatory and violate the basic human rights of the people detained in those centre as the “Minniti-Orlando” law in this matter demonstrates (see point 1 of the present report).

The other law enforcement practice that may be considered anti-discriminatory for the immigrant minorities first arriving into the country is a legislation issued in 2017 (law 2017/024-042988), which oblige the local authorities to provide accommodation to immigrants and refugees.²⁶ However, as already explained in this report (see point 1) the national legislation on minorities can be modified by local authorities in order to accommodate the needs of the local population in the territories they govern and administrate. A case of discriminatory legal enforcement practice is the one occurred in Tuscany, in the small town of Cascina where the local authorities excluded from the assignation of social housing non-EU residents.²⁷

In this case the newly elected *Lega* local authorities used a local law to enforce a discriminatory practice (Toscana, law n.41/2015) by modifying the local law on this matter (law n. 96/96) and by introducing the norm that those who apply for social housing must demonstrate that they do not own any property in their country of origin. In this case, the local authorities of Cascina refer to the law D.P.R n. 445/2000, art. 3, clause 2, clause 4. Basically, if an African citizen regularly resident in Italy wishes to apply for social housing in this area, he/she had to go back to Africa and bring back a certificate from his/her country of origin that testifies that he/her does not own any property in his/her country of origin. He/her has 60 days to do so otherwise he/she is permanently excluded from applying.

²⁵<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita-stranieri/Documents/Reports-MSNA-mese-dicembre-2017-31122017>.

²⁶<https://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1209/Bando-di-gara.pdf>

²⁷<https://www.gonews.it/2017/05/29/case-popolari-cascina-cgil-suina-norme-fini-discriminatori/29/05/2017>

Another norm is the legal practice for acquiring the maternity bonus that the Italian Ministry for the Family has conceded to Italian citizens but that can include also foreign citizens who live legally in the country.

The norms are as follows:

- 1) residence in Italy
- 2) Italian citizenship or citizen of one of the EU member states
- 3) non-EU citizens in possess of the status of refugee
- 4) non-EU citizens in possess of a EU visa permit (art. 9/n.286/1998)
- 5) visa permit to EU citizens' family members (art. 10/17/ n. 30/2007)²⁸

This maternity bonus excludes those who are not recognised to live legally in the country. Another norm applied in the year 2017 is the right to apply to permanent residency visa card, which is strictly bound to the legal costs to obtain it for the applicant and for his/her family members. The income threshold has been fixed to annual 5.824.91 euros earned from social benefit income for one single applicant, but the annual threshold earnings augment according to the number of the applicant's family members and offspring:

- 1) 1 applicant+ 1 family member= 8.737,26 euros per year
- 2) 1 applicant+ 2 family members=11.649,27 euros per year
- 3) 1 applicant+3 family members= 14.562,27 euros per year
- 4) 1 applicant + 4 family members= 17.474,73 per year
- 5) 1 applicant + 2 or more underage offspring (minor of 14 years of age) = 14.562.27 euros per year (same as in point 3)
- 6) 1 applicant+ 2 family members+ 2 or more offspring (minor of 14 years of age) = 17.474.73 (same as in point 4).²⁹

As can be understood from the above data, it makes very difficult to obtain the permanent residency visa card to all those foreign nationals with family members considering that many have jobs which not allow such earnings in one year. This is especially true for foreign workers' communities employed in the agriculture sector with not a proper working contract although

²⁸<https://www.stranieriinitalia.it/1-esperto-risponde-esperto-risponde-esperto-risponde/il-bonus-mamma-domani-che-cosa-e-e-a-chi-spetta.html>.

²⁹<https://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita/primo-piano/carta-di-soggiorno-quanto-bisogna-guadagnare-per-chiederla-nel-2017.html> 01/02/2017

living legally in the country.³⁰ However, this legal practice has instead been applied with positive feedback by the local authorities of the city of Palermo (Sicily region), which in 2017 has launched a programme that saw the acquisition of Italian citizenship for 300 foreign nationals within a promotional plan of assimilation of the foreign minorities to the local community that started five years before (2012) and has managed to grant the Italian citizenship to 2.713 foreign national legally resident in the city of Palermo.³¹

It could be concluded then that the law enforcement practices on foreign minorities present on the Italian territory could be improved as in the case of the minors un-accompanied and that other norms like social housing or benefits vary according to the region where the foreign nationals happen to live as the national norms on this matter can be applied with some modifications or by the initiative of the local authorities. This creates different situations within the national territory that can bring either an anti-discriminatory law enforcement practice or a discriminatory law enforcement practice according to the region or area where the foreign national happens to live in.

Regarding instead of the Gipsies communities in Italy, the year 2017 has seen discriminatory law practice by local authorities especially in the cities of Naples and Rome where the Town hall assembly has approved the forced removal of Roma gipsies from their camps and the segregation of the same minority group in another camp built by the local authorities and provided with security to control the minority's freedom of movement in and out of the camp. In Naples, this plan affected 1.300 Roma gipsies of Rumanian nationality, while in Rome a similar plan meant a forced removal of 7.500 Roma gipsies and forced closing down of their camps, forcing those people to be moved into another camp built by the local authorities in the XV borough of the city and with the same segregation norms as in Naples.³² In Rome however, the local authorities have acted on a wider number of people: 7.500 of which 5.300 were already living in structures offered and monitored by the local authorities, while 2.200 people did not fall within this plan because they did not have an official registered residence. From the 5.300 unities selected, were excluded those without documents or living illegally in the country (which will make the 20% of the total) and this will bring the number to 4.300

³⁰<https://www.cisl.it/grandi-temi/europa-mondo-politiche-migratorie/684-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-vita-dei-lavoratori-stranieri-in-agricoltura.html>

³¹<https://www.ilpost.it/2017/05/22/palermo-accoglienza/>

³²<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/03/29/campi-rom-lonu-richiama-italia-e-per-la-raggi-la-bocciatura-e-piu-severa/34/83919/>

while the other excluded will be added to the 2.200 making those people living in very precarious way and without an accommodation or any form of assistance.³³ To this, it must be added the “mandatory schooling” norm for the children of Roma gipsy parents, which is considered discriminatory because targets just that specific minority living on the territory.³⁴ The racism and prejudice toward the Gipsy communities in Italy is quite widespread as it will be better explained and illustrated in point 6 of the present report.

The other minority that has experienced the law enforcement practices is the LGBT community in Italy. In the specific, the LGBT community in Italy has seen anti-discriminatory law enforcement practice since the legalization of same sex marriage in 2017, although the possibility of step-children adoption (the chance to adopt the partner’s child) has not been enforced in the year 2017 as promised by the political authorities.³⁵ The other minorities that suffered of discriminatory law enforcement practice is the Nigerian community living in the country. Between 26 January and 18 February 2017, the Minister of Interior Marco Minniti alerted the *Questure* (local police headquarters) of the following cities: Rome, Brindisi, Torino, Caltanissetta. The order was to trace and arrest an “adequate number” of Nigerian citizens without visa to be deported back to their country. This was perceived as a discriminatory act because it was not giving the people arrested the right to appeal to regularise their legal position in Italy.³⁶

3. Manifestations of Xenophobia among the Executive and Legislative Powers

The year 2017 has been crucial for the electoral campaign that saw the victory of the far-right party *Lega* and the populist party *Movimento 5 Stelle* in March 2018. In the EU, it is evident that the victory of ultra-nationalist parties rises some concerns as in 17 EU countries the far-right parties have a parliamentary representation.

Up to the moment of writing (2018) there are three EU countries that have an openly far-right government (Poland, Hungary, and Italy) and in other seven EU countries political forces of this ideological inclinations are part of the executive, or they support it from the outside. We

³³<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/03/10/roma-la-raggi-copia-lo-sciagurato-piano-rom-di-alemanno/3442976/>

³⁴<https://www.osservatoriodiritti.it/2018/04/06/rom-in-italia>

³⁵https://www.agi.it/data-journalism/difesa_gay_lesbiche_trans_italia_migliora-1780966/news/2017-05-2017/

³⁶<https://www.contropiano.org/altro/2017/02/01/italia-caccia-ai-nigeriani-lordine-viene-dal-ministro-dellinterno-088471/>

are before organizations or political parties and movements with common characteristics: anti-immigrants, anti-multi-ethnic society, more national autonomy, local economy against liberalism, rejection of the political class or the political establishment, responsible in their view of all the problems that the country in question is experiencing.

In 2017, in Italy became more widespread and popular this tendency to lean toward this ultra-nationalist vision of politics and the major responsible for this ideological and political mutation is the propaganda of right wing and populist parties in the person of politicians, members of the government, and mainly, part of the opposition. The Italian political leader mostly present in this activity of propaganda is Matteo Salvini, leader of the *Lega* and newly appointed minister of the Interior. Notorious are his statements against immigrants, Roma gypsies and Muslims living or arriving in the country. To give some examples: in January 2017, Salvini talking of African immigrants landing on Italian shores, declared in an interview: “if I will become minister of interior, I will ditch them on African shores with few nuts and a goodbye”.³⁷ Salvini also said “We must save everyone but then send them back where they come from”.³⁸ Salvini is also very active with the use of social media during the 2017. This is what he said in a tweet on the Italian national football team in November 2017: “too many foreigners on the pitch, from the first division to the Premiere League. STOP INVASION and more space for the Italians”.³⁹ But also his political ally, Berlusconi started to make declarations on immigrants that can be considered along the line of his ally Salvini. Berlusconi declared: “today in Italy we count 630 thousand of immigrants, of which only the 5% (30.000) has the right to remain because can claim the refugee status, meaning they fled because of war and death”.⁴⁰

Clearly, here Berlusconi attempts to use fake data in order to scare the Italian public opinion on the number of immigrants arriving in that year 2017 on the Italian shores. This has been a constant of the far-right propaganda in the year 2017: to convince the Italians that in the country arrived thousands and thousands of immigrants daily and that not all of them are fleeing wars or persecutions.

³⁷<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/01/12/migranti-salvini-se-saro-al-governo-li-spediro-sulle-spiagge-con-un-pacchetto-di-noccioline/3311804/>

³⁸<https://www.panorama.it/news/politica/matteo-salvini-frasi-shock/>

³⁹<https://www.esquire.com/it/news/politica/a13594062/10-peggiori-tweet-matteo-salvini/>

⁴⁰<https://www.ilmanifesto.it/le-bufale-di-berlusconi-e-salvini-sugli-immigrati-secondo-la-voce-info/>

This type of indoctrination seems to have worked as it will be better illustrated in point 6 of the present report. Most worrying is another statement made by Salvini talking about an episode that saw in December 2017 a group of neo-Nazis breaking into the headquarters of an immigrants and refugees volunteer association in the city of Como. At the reactions and statements of the political leader of the left party PD, Matteo Renzi, who manifested his concerns about the episode, Salvini said: “The problem in Italy is not those four guys [the neo-Nazis] but the immigration out of control, the prisons full of immigrants, the illegal immigrants who rob the Italians of work”.⁴¹

But also, the neo-fascist party *Fratelli d'Italia* leader Giorgia Meloni, declared: “Rome town hall spends 70% of its funds for immigrants and Roma gipsies and the 30% for everybody else. There is actually a racist Italy, racist against of the Italians, particularly against the poorest Italians”.⁴² But also Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia* party coordinator in the parliament, Renato Brunetta has declared referring to left parties and movements protesting for the racism against immigrants: “all this ‘being good’ [toward immigrants] generates only racism”. And, on the same issue, the *Lega* politician Paolo Grimaldi: “the left constantly forgets the Italians.”⁴³ The insisting of the right on “putting Italian first” and accusing the left of doing exactly the opposite, has created a climate of suspicion and discrediting of the left-wing parties and movements, and fuelled the feeling of xenophobia and racism already underlying the Italian political culture as it will better be explained in the present report. It is also necessary to look at some declarations of the minister of the Interior, Marco Minniti (PD) responsible in the period monitored for this report, of a deal with Libya in order to stop the flux of migrants towards the Italian shores. This deal meant giving full powers to the Libyan authorities to stop the migrants coming from the sub-Saharan countries. The Libyan authorities established 29 detention centres where there were later reports of the use of torture on the immigrants detained there.⁴⁴

The UN condemned Italy for allowing that but Minniti replied dismissing the whole issue of violation of human rights highlighted by the UN: “The question of human rights is crucial but we cannot resign to the impossibility to control the fluxes. The UN could visit the detention

⁴¹<https://www.iltempo.it/politica/2017/12/01/news/salvini-il-problema-e-renzi-non-i-nazi-ed-esplode-il-caso-1039081>

⁴²<https://www.secoloditalia.it/2017/10/meloni-roma-razzista-verso-gli-italiani-lo-dimostrano-i-numeri-video/>.

⁴³<https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/crocace/sinistra-marcia-coi-migranti-buonismo-che-produce-razzismo-13999651.html>

⁴⁴https://www.repubblica.it/solidarietprofughi/2018/05/04/news/libia_circa_800_migranti_e_rifugiati_trattenuti_nel_centro_di_detenzione_di_zwasa_in_condizioni_disumane-195512120/

camps thanks to us”.⁴⁵ Minniti is also known as the minister of the Interior author of an immigration law, the “Minniti-Orlando” law that has several controversial points regarding the rights of the immigrants who arrive in Italy as explained in point 1 of the present report. This is only a selected sample of how the executive and the legislative powers have expressed their views on immigrants.

What should be noticed however, is that the political class on the right of the ideological spectrum is attempting to incite to racial hate towards two categories in particular: immigrants (Africans and Muslims in the specific) and Roma gypsies. According to the latest report by Amnesty International on xenophobia and racism in Italy (2017-2018), in the year 2017, 500 out of 1.425 candidates for the general election in 2018 used racist and discriminatory declarations or statements: on a sample of 117 candidates, racist language is to be attributed to the *Lega* (50%), to the neo-fascist party *Fratelli d'Italia* (27%), and to Berlusconi's party *Forza Italia* (17%).⁴⁶

Also, another worrying element is that the left-wing minister of the Interior, Marco Minniti, condoned the use of torture as a necessary means to stop the migratory flux into the country, compromising on his own party's ethics on civil and human rights, and thus trying to become more popular with the Italian public opinion quite largely oriented toward a xenophobic and ultra-nationalist attitude as better explained in point 6 of the present report.

4. Statements against Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism among Government Representatives and Prominent Political Activists

The research of statements or declarations of government representatives and prominent political activists have revealed the political and ideological weakness of the liberal or left-leaning politicians within the Italian socio-political panorama, as their voices were less prominent and whereas heard or made public, the reaction of the public opinion was rather negative by and large.

The most vocal and exposed high profile Italian politician has been Laura Boldrini, speaker of the House for the Chamber of Deputies. Therefore, quite a high profile political figure of

⁴⁵<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/11/15/tortura-sui-migranti-libia-minniti-non-fa-dietrofront-sulle-scelte-italiane-lonu-ha-visitato-i-campi-grazi-a-noi/3979977>

⁴⁶<https://www.amnesty.it/amnesty-international-presenta-rapporto-2017-2018>

reference. She has been campaigning constantly against the right-wing parties' xenophobia and racism and she has received several death threats on social media whose authors have been only recently arrested for.⁴⁷ Laura Boldrini declared: "it is time to react strongly against racists. Italian people are ignorant and do not know that immigrants are a resource and that the Muslims represent only 6% of the entire population. There is a dramatic discrepancy between the numbers [of immigrants on Italian soil] and what instead is perceived [by the people]."⁴⁸

The left-wing politicians also expressed their concerns at some statements by the neo-fascist party *Fratelli d'Italia* leader Giorgia Meloni when she associated in a parliamentary debate, the crime of rape to immigrants. The reactions of some politicians left-leaning condemned such association as openly discriminatory and racist. The PD politician Stefano Fassina replied by stating: "this is the squalor of the Italian politics trying to get some more votes"; or, as the PD politician, president of the parliamentary committee 'Equal Opportunities' declared on the same issue: "This is to instigate the lower racist instincts in the country in order to get more votes".

Also, Maurizio Lupi, leader of the *Alleanza Popolare* Party at the Senate, said: "a rapist is always a rapist independently of his own nationality. Or we really want to believe in the equation migrant equal rapist?".⁴⁹ The question mark with which the politician Maurizio Lupi ends his statement, brings in the climate of racism, xenophobia and racism fuelled by the right-leaning politicians which have heavily influenced the Italian public opinion. But also, the Pope took a stance against the xenophobic and racist attitude of part of the Italian political class declaring the following: "Instead of building peace, they are spreading violence".⁵⁰

The left-leaning politician Giuseppe Civati also declared on his blog: "Because it is not enough not to be racist, we must also be anti-racists...and while are coming back fascist manifestos and posts on FaceBook of this far-right fringe, we must keep up the profile of the anti-fascist values".⁵¹ The few statements reported above reveal a difficulty by the left wing parties and

⁴⁷https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2018/02/04/news/facebook_individuato_autore_post_contro_la_boldrini-188013237

⁴⁸<https://www.secoloditalia.it/2017/07/migranti-ira-della-Boldrini-contro-gli-italiani-ignoranti-e-razzisti-video/>

⁴⁹https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/fassina-contro-boldrini-i-protagonisti-stupri-quasi-sempre_1435227.html

⁵⁰<https://www.blastingnews.com/cronaca/2017/11/papa-francesco-contro-i-politici-anti-immigrati-violenza-razzista-002189563.html>

⁵¹<https://www.ciwati.it/2017/09/02/non-basta-non-razzisti-bisogna-anti-razzisti/>

their weakness as it is evident that the right-wing parties have successfully managed to create a xenophobic and racist climate in the country. The card of racism and fear of the Other plays quite a pivotal role in orienting the Italian public opinion and electorate. From this political climate, the left is coming out weakened and defeated as nowadays its principles and values are shared only by a small proportion of the population as will be better explained in point 6 of the present report.

5. Position of the Immigrants in the Country in the Monitored Period

In 2017, thanks to the “Minniti-Orlando” law (see points 1 and 2 of the present report) the conditions and rights of immigrants living in the country has not had a specific advancement. This new immigration law has instead meant a further restriction in immigrants’ rights due to the willingness of the Minister of the Interior, Marco Minniti, to re-establish order and give a message on the issue of security to the Italian citizens, marginalising in this way the impact of the right-wing parties’ propaganda on the electorate and to comply to some EU directives in order to contain and limit the number of immigrants and refugees coming to Europe through Italy. And finally, to be able to fulfil the agreements made with some African countries like Nigeria as it will better be explained in this section of the report. In January 2017, a document issued by the *Viminale* (how it is called the building that hosts the Ministry of the Interior in Rome) ordered to all the *questure* (police headquarters) to initiate a series of round-ups targeting specifically Nigerian citizens.

The most notorious of these round-ups happened outside the Central Train station in Milan, where 52 Nigerians were arrested and of which only 10 resulted to be without a visa permit and therefore, deported back to the country of origin.⁵² The official reasons for such law enforcement reveal a worrying political attitude, which is the so-called “State racism”. The round-ups imply that once the irregular Nigerian citizen is arrested by the police, is then taken to one of the CIE centres and await there to be deported back to Nigeria, without the possibility to appeal against the arrest or against the deportation, which is a forced one. In the country are still full functioning the *hotspots* (see Report 2016), which are nothing more than centres for detention, identification, registration and expulsion of the migrants arriving in Italy mainly by sea and where they are deported back before being transferred to other detention centres.

⁵²<https://www.meltingpot.org/il-razzismo-di-Stato.htmlWyZXmx.lKjq1>

In the “Minniti-Orlando” law, there is a further discriminatory element, which is the one that classify migrants according to the following categories: 1) those who decide/accept to work with a low salary especially in the ghettos scattered throughout the South of the country (see points 1 and 2 of the present report); those who accept to work as volunteer in the social sector (maybe as interpreters or cultural mediators for other immigrants); those that do not wish to fill these two categories but that are willing to be granted a visa in order to live and work regularly in the country.

This type of regulation for immigrants defines also their right to freedom of movement within the perimeters of the same centre where they live or, within the borders of the town or city in which they have been allocated. The round-ups of immigrants are coordinated between police forces and local authorities and are conducted for “security reasons” or simply for “common decency”. In other words, immigrants are taken away from the sight of the Italian citizens because they might spoil the urban décor of the city.

This might mean an operation of “cleansing” the streets and the urban areas from migrants and double check in this way, who has a regular visa permit from those who are illegally in the country. Such “State racism” becomes thus a paradigm of post-democratic order where the relationship is not any longer between the individual and the institutions based on the freedom of the individual, but rather, there is structural violation of the individual freedoms which does not leave anymore any margin to the inclusiveness of the diverse within a given community. The “institutional racism” as the one applied in Italy with the “Minniti-Orlando” law should not establish the life of migrants who are “not worth of” according to its criteria, but because they are human beings and as such, individuals that should enjoy certain fundamental rights as humans and not based on the colour of their skin, or nationality. In matter of fact, the immigration law and the law enforcement practices observed in the monitored period seem to consider more the country of origin or the skin colour as elements which redefine not only the notion of “citizenship” but also of “human being”, and this is not acceptable.

The “Orlando-Minniti” immigration law reveals also the feelings towards immigrants that the Italian authorities have demonstrated to have on this issue. In 2017, with an over increasing far-right and populist propaganda against the institutions and against immigrants and minorities, the government used the immigrants as a tool to gain consensus from the Italian electorate, showing the adoption of a hard-line on this specific topic, similar to the one

envisaged by the nationalist right. Therefore, the anti-immigration feelings registered with the law enforcement practices (as already illustrated in the present report) and by the attitude undertaken by the Italian authorities should be read under this light. The decision taken by the Interior minister Marco Minniti in the summer of 2017 of stopping the “humanitarian corridors” so to avoid the landing on the Italian shores of refugees and economic migrants should be read as a political manoeuvre in view of the general election in 2018.

The Italian authorities know too well that the immigration flux can be handled but decided to give a strong message to the Italians that the PD (left wing party and government party in 2017) is perfectly able to respond to the worries of the country concerning the problem of immigrants. In 2017, it has been detected as never before a wide distance between the main political forces and the sensitivity of a small minority of population in matter of minorities and immigrants’ rights. Two facts can actually illustrate the anti-immigrant’s sentiments shown by the Italian government: one is in the summer of 2017, the stop to NGOs ships in the Mediterranean to rescue immigrants. The other is the repressive action against a group of immigrants and refugees that had been forcibly evicted from an abandoned building in centre of Rome also in the summer of the 2017. Furthermore, the already mentioned law enforcement practice of the Nigerian citizens round-ups give an idea of the attitude that the 2017 Italian government and authorities generally had toward migrants.

Regarding the social support available to immigrants, this category of people can rely mainly on private organisations and charities as the “Minniti-Orlando” laws has ‘upgraded’ the social workers present in the CIE (or CPR) centres as “public officer” more similar to a security officer rather than an operator provided by the institutions on who the immigrants can rely on.⁵³ On this point, it must be stressed though that immigrants usually tend to rely on un-official support as for instance, charities or private associations. This is because many are illegally living in the country or do not trust the official channels. Therefore, in those cities or areas where the local authorities open a space for social support to the immigrants present on the territory, there is little presence of them. The ideal would be if the official social support could work alongside the un-official support network. This would benefit everybody involved but it looks as there is not a common plan lined up yet.⁵⁴

⁵³Annalisa Camilli <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/04/12/decreto-minniti-orlando-legge>

⁵⁴<https://www.lavorosociale.com/archivio/vol-7-n-1/article/le-reti-degli-immigrati>

6. Society's Attitude towards Immigrants, Foreign nationals and Various Ethnic Minorities

For this section of the present report have been taken into consideration several sources, reports and surveys carried by different NGOs, research institutes and official organizations on this specific topic. The picture that emerges from the comparison of the data gathered by those surveys is rather worrying because sees Italy reaching in the year 2017 the peak of intolerance and discrimination towards ethnic minorities, immigrants and foreign nationals living on the territory.

The Parliamentary committee "Joe Cox" published in the summer of 2017 a report that provides an overall view of the level of intolerance in the country and among the population. The report is entitled the "Pyramid of Hate" to indicate in fact the level of xenophobia and intolerance among the Italians.⁵⁵ The report uses the data provided by the survey agency IPSOS MORI and its "ignorance index" (an index that measures the level of ignorance and misinformation present in the country object of the survey. From these data, we can conclude that Italy is one of the less informed countries in Europe with respect of immigration.

The majority of the Italians are convinced that the overall number of immigrants living in Italy is over 30% while instead is only the 8% of the overall population. And that the Muslim minority living in the country is more than 20% while instead the real percentage is 4%.⁵⁶ Moreover, in Italy has augmented the intolerance against immigrants from Islamic countries, which are considered a threat for the West by 65.5% of Italians. The image and prejudice against the Jews have instead remained the same and do not seem to have been altered by different external circumstances as the episodes of anti-Semitism registered in 2017 against Jews in Italy are 130 (the same number registered the year before, 2016).⁵⁷

According to another survey, Italians show to be still victims of the old prejudices when considering the Jewish minority as 34% on the interviewed are convinced that Jews control the international economics and finance to their own advantage, 28% think that Jews are more loyal to the state of Israel than to the Italian state, to which it follows that 25% of the sample interviewed (1,000 people) are convinced that the Jews cannot be considered fully Italians. To

⁵⁵<https://www.website-pace.net/documents/19879/3373777/20170825-HatePyramid-EN.pdf>

⁵⁶<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perils-perception-2017>

⁵⁷<https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/>

this last date however, we must say that 44% of the interviewed disagree.⁵⁸ Immigration as an overall phenomenon is instead perceived as a source of concern by the 35% in 2017, against the 1% of 2012. For many there are in the country too many immigrants (41.8% of the Italian interviewed) and many agree on this data (28,2%).

Italians who think that immigration has compromised public services (completely agree: 37.6% almost agree: 32.9%). However, there is also a quarter of the sample interviewed who see positively the presence of ethnic minorities and immigrants in the country. On the taking into the country immigrants instead, the sample of Italians interviewed is split almost in two halves: 25% say that the Italian authorities should welcome all the immigrants who try to land on Italian shores, while 24% instead, say that the Italian authorities should reject all the immigrants. The interesting data is however, that 44% would accept only political refugees. Also, the 22.8% of the Italians interviewed show strong anti-immigrant feelings and thus, emerges a common pattern: those who belong to this percentage are mainly over fifties, living in the North-West of the country, with little education, housewives, employed in factories, and people that define themselves “fascist”.

The survey also reveals that 54% believes that the minorities must adapt their culture to the majority’s culture; the 60.8% perceive the migration from Islamic countries as a threat for the West; the 65.5% perceive Islam as a religion far too traditionalist. However, 44.4% think that Muslim living regularly in the country have the right to build their mosques (although the 31.8% of the Italian interviewed do not agree with this point). The 83% of the Italian population is very prevented and racist against the Roma and Sinti minorities.⁵⁹ Finally, the 60% associate Islam to jihadism and therefore, the association between religion and terrorism is still very strong. This belief is also due to the lack of understanding and knowledge of geopolitics and because of the level of communication and system of information provided by the media.⁶⁰

Social media and the web are mainly responsible for the level of hate speech, xenophobia and racism experienced in the country as the data demonstrate that 29.1% of foreigners are

⁵⁸for further details on this specific issue consult the following document available on line:

https://www.osservatorioantiseimi-c02.kxcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Opinione_Stereotipi_sintesi.pdf

⁵⁹<https://ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/02/23-siamo-zingari-brutti-sporchi-e-cattivi-e-vittime-orgogliose-del-vostro-razzismo/4181136/>

⁶⁰<https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2017/09/26/ricerca-ipsosdec-aumenta-in-italia-intolleranza-verso-gli-immigrati-per-il-608-la-migrazione-da-paesi-islamici-e-una-minaccia/>

experiencing daily discrimination either at work (16.9%) or while seeking work (9.3%), looking to buy or rent a house (10.5%), in public offices and transport (8.1%) or in dealing with neighbours (6.2%).⁶¹ The interesting data on hate speech on the social platforms is that immigrants or minorities like Muslims, Jews and Roma-Sinti gypsies are not discriminated in the light of some sort of pseudo-scientific theories on their alleged inferiority but rather on their behaviour, culture/faith and their alleged negative qualities. What seems to emerge is that especially internet and social media platforms are full of fake news and therefore, feed the current “post-truth” climate in the country, which appeals to the emotions and prejudices or fears of the people rather than to the factual reality of things.

More than 200 websites have been found by Amnesty International’s investigation on hate speech in Italy especially linked to political parties in view of the upcoming elections of the following year (2018).⁶² Various other surveys (COSPE, Carta di Roma, UNICRI) have stressed the worrying high level of hate speech in the year 2017 for political purposes. There is an alarming extension of misconception about minorities, immigrants and foreigners and an open planning of manipulating the public opinion for electoral or political purposes. The proliferation of fake news regarding immigrants and Muslims has been impressive and has affected the whole media information system. National and international surveys have alarmingly pointed out at the level of hate speech in the country alongside the discrimination against certain minorities as already explained in this report.

The Roma-Sinti minority seems the group that suffered mostly discrimination and acts of hate-oriented violence in the country. Which are then the causes of such climate of hate that is currently experienced in the country? There are many factors that should be taken into consideration: the first one is the overly biased media system of information. In Italy, the freedom of press is not as it should be in a proper liberal democracy. The media are in fact heavily influenced by the main political parties and therefore, tend to provide oftentimes a distorted perception of the reality according to the political necessities and ideological tenets of the party of reference. In fact, this is the major problem.

⁶¹<https://www.website-pace-net/documents/19879/3373777/20170825-HatePyramid-EN.pdf>

⁶²<https://www.amnesty.it/rapporti-annuali/rapporto-annuale-2017-2018/europa/italia>

Large part of the Italian public opinion seems to have a distorted perception in regard of immigrants, immigration, or ethnic and religious minorities and this is largely due to the type of TV programmes or TV news that the average Italian watches (in this respect, the major responsible for this misinformation are Berlusconi's TV networks). Also, in reference to immigration, the Italian press often use terms like "wave", "invasion" and similar catastrophic type of language that tends to scare the viewer. Another factor is the politicians (especially Salvini who in 2017 had an over exposure on the media) that are constantly invited to talk shows with hosts often leaning toward the politician's line of thought.

But Italian politicians have also discovered internet and especially with reference to the Movimento 5 Stelle, the membership and the leadership of the party are very active online. Added to this it should also be remembered the economic and financial crisis suffered by large part of the population, who experiences lack of work, precarious financial conditions and failure of the institutions to address such needs. In this climate, it is easier to fuel up the xenophobic element, and creating an escape goat that will absorb all the problems of the country. But most importantly, the racist and xenophobic card has been played by the political class in view of the elections. Therefore, we can conclude that ruthless politicians have been exploiting the fears and concerns of the Italians and used them for their own political success and a well organised propaganda system.

The most concerning factor is that the majority of the population is now xenophobic and racist with only a quarter that instead is worried of the socio-political climate and tend to protest and act against it. It can be concluded that the *Lega* and also the *Movimento 5 Stelle* are the major responsible for people's minds manipulation and the increased level of prejudice and discrimination experienced in the year 2017.

Cases of manifestations against immigrants, foreigners or ethnic minorities are many. In the year 2017, we count 109 new episodes of racism especially on the web that regards anti-Semitism in the specific and which represents the tip of the iceberg of the overall situation in the country.⁶³ We have selected some examples that we find most significant in illustrating the

⁶³<https://www.agensir.it/italia/2018/betti-guetta-osservatorio-antisemitismo-gli-ebrei-sono-la-spia-di-una-italia-sempre-piu-intollerante/>

level of intolerance and racism experienced. The most relevant is the neo-Nazi blitz in an immigrants' volunteer centre in the city of Como (Lombardy region).

On 29 November 2017, 15 people belonging to the group "Veneto Fronte Skinheads" irrupted into a meeting of the immigrant volunteer workers association "Como Without Borders" and, while intimidating with their presence the volunteer workers present in the room, read aloud a statement in which they were saying: "...For all of you, children of a country that you no longer love...we are here to remind you that the real people love and don't destroy themselves. Stop the invasion".⁶⁴

Another big manifestation against immigrants was the big nationwide demonstration organised in Rome by Salvini against the *ius soli* law against the right of immigrants' children born in Italy to automatically acquire Italian citizenship by their birth right (*ius soli*).⁶⁵ Contemporary to the demonstration organised by Salvini, Giorgia Meloni, leader of the neo-fascist party *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy) claimed to have collected 100.000 signatures for a petition against the same law.⁶⁶ In the summer 2017, there has been another initiative taken by the far-right organisation *Generazione Identitaria* (Generation Identity) to stop the rescue of immigrants in the Mediterranean sea by NGOs ships. The organisation went into the Mediterranean waters with its own ship to monitor the presence of NGOs ships and therefore, impede them to rescue any immigrant or refugees in the area.⁶⁷ It must be said that there were very few manifestations pro-immigrants and the only one worth of mention is the big pro-immigrant demonstration organised by Milan Town Hall in May 2017 where more than 100.00 people coming from all over Italy gathered in the city of Milan to show their support to immigrants and ethnic minorities living in the country and to oppose to the anti-immigrant and discriminatory attitude of the right wing parties. Many however, criticised the Milan demonstration as too political and used only for political ends rather than really concerned about immigrants' rights.⁶⁸

⁶⁴<https://www.thelocal.it/20171129/video-italian-neo-nazis-como>

⁶⁵https://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/politica/roma_sit_in_lega_contro_ius_soli_piazza_santi_apostoli_bli_ndata-

⁶⁶<https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/100mila-no-contro-lo-ius-soli-1477860.html>

⁶⁷<https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/migranti-generazione-identitaria-ha-trovato-nave-anti-ong-1413985.html>

⁶⁸https://www.milano.repubblica.it/hermes/inbox/2017/05/19/news/la_giornata_migliaia_di_persone_oggi_in_piazza_i_centri_sociali_insistono_no_a_una_sfilata_filogovernativa-165882142/

The overall attitude of the average Italian citizen with regard of the immigrants, ethnic minorities or foreigners has worsened since 2016, creating a spiral of hate in the country. The percentage of Italians who do not express racist or xenophobic feelings has drastically reduced in 2017 producing a climate of division and hate not only against the categories above mentioned, but also against other Italians who tend to support them.

7. Incitement to Ethnic and Religious Hatred

In 2017, the migratory influx issue has been heavily manipulated by political forces on the right of the political spectrum often aided in this indoctrination of the population against immigrants, by the use of media (and in the specific, by the social platforms.). In 2017, the oncoming arrival of migrants and refugees on the Italian shores, the *ius soli* law, the introduction of an ethical code for the NGOs operating in the Mediterranean Sea for the rescue of immigrants, and the question of the radicalization process and the terrorist threat, have been the main topics analysed and discussed by the media. Oftentimes, the handling of such topics by the media has been tampered with hate speech elements and fake news amplified by an irresponsible use of the social media. These phenomena have facilitated a distorted perception of the reality and of the topics abovementioned.

As already explained in the present report, the “ignorance index” of the Italian population is such that favours the widespreading of fake news especially when looking and the migration phenomenon. The distorted perception of migration, immigrants, or ethnic minorities present on the Italian territory is due to the massive use of propaganda, popular slogans, and fake data. All elements that have a negative impact on the public opinion. The impact on Italian citizens has an effect of people’s attitudes toward a specific social issue, and those attitudes become then, behaviour.⁶⁹ According to the research group *Osservatorio di Pavia*, for the whole 2017, the media have been continuously talking of the migratory phenomenon and about immigrants with only 43 days without mentioning the topic in their newsreels. Furthermore, it has been recorded an increasing 20% more of alarmistic headlines on the topic of immigration in respect of the year 2016.⁷⁰ In addition, on the data related to hate speech comments on FaceBook, it has been noticed that only 29 comments have been removed out of 100 flagged to the social platform authorities because of their hate speech content, and it took more that 24 hours to

⁶⁹<https://www.cvslombardia.it/milano/post/immigrati-fake-news-e-mass-media-i-materiali-del-seminario-del-6-giugno/>

⁷⁰<https://www.osservatorio.it/en/>

remove them since they had been flagged out. This means that 71 comments which were clearly tampered with hate speech language or content were not removed. In 2016, however, only 3 comments had been removed after flagging them to FaceBook, meaning that there has been an improvement and more attention is now given in monitoring and detecting hate speech comments on this popular social platform.⁷¹

Going back to the way the official press or information media system operates, it must be stressed that in Italy exists since 2008 the *Carta di Roma* (Chart of Rome), which is a deontological code of conduct for Italian journalists. In 2011, it has been introduced in this document the “substantial truth” principle, according to which Italian journalists have the duty to report only using ascertained data when making public a news.⁷² However, despite the *Carta di Roma* deontological code, there are several journalists who report biased news and subjective analysis of topics like immigrants or ethnic minorities. Here we give you two examples of this type of journalism. The first example is the daily *Libero*.

This daily newspaper is the most racist of all and because of its tendency to publish articles or headlines openly discriminatory or racist and with a provocative language, has collected in the few months of the 2017 (January-June) 5 disciplinary actions by the legal authorities and by the Order of Italian Journalists.⁷³ The other example is a quite popular programme broadcasted by Berlusconi’s TV network *Rete Quattro* that daily was informing the audience of crimes allegedly committed by immigrants, Muslims, Roma gypsies, of alleged injustices suffered by the local population at the advantage of the immigrants and so on. In April 2018, the programme entitled *Dalla Vostra Parte* (On Your Side) alongside a similar populist programme entitled *Quinta Colonna* (Fifth Column) has been eventually closed down because of its openly biased system of information.⁷⁴

Regarding instead the popularity of radical nationalists’ literature, films, music and ultra-nationalist rock bands, there is not strong evidence in the country. These realities do exist but they are confined to the margins of society and relegated to the fringe groups and do not have a real impact on the majority of people. Even the most known far-right organisations like *Forza*

⁷¹<https://www.cvslombardia.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/hate-speech-facebook.pdf>

⁷²<https://www.cartadiroma.org/cosa-e-la-carta-di-roma/codice-deontologico/>

⁷³<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/07/09/razzismo-e-xenofobia-contro-il-quotidiano-di-vittorio-feltri-la-campagna-liberodallodio/3739644>

⁷⁴<https://www.tvblog.it/post/1531381/rete-4-chiudono-per-troppo-populismo-dalla-vostra-parte-e-quinta-colonna>

Nuova and *Casapound* tend to keep their literary and artistic production within their inner circles.

8. Radical Nationalist Groups and Parties

In the year 2017, we see a major presence of radical far right groups on the territory and especially, on the web. The reason for such manifested presence is the increasing popularity of ultra-nationalist parties like the *Lega* and of neo-fascist parties like *Fratelli d'Italia*. Furthermore, the widespreading discrimination and xenophobic prejudice against the immigrants and ethnic and religious minorities prepared the ground for a stronger presence of such groups. Few words are necessary in order to better understand the ideological nature of these groups and parties before we illustrate their action on the territory and explain the level of popular consensus that they are receiving from the local population. The galaxy of the far-right/ neo-Nazi groups present in the country aspires to a political legitimacy and to become widely accepted by the electorate as the example of *CasaPound Italia* that aims at winning some seats in the Italian parliament after being at the European parliament in the February 2018.⁷⁵

The ideology of reference of these groups is anti-democratic, oriented towards social issues as poverty, un-employment, social justice, etc., anti-immigrant and openly racist and became very popular with young people and in the periphery of big cities like Rome or Milan. This new type of the so called “fascists of the third millennium” does not propose any more the metapolitics of radical neo-fascist groups of the 1970s, but rather, tend to offer a socialist welfare for the poor and becomes very active on the web, in the streets and in local town halls. Interesting is the mixed message that these groups give to the outside: on one side, they are quite violent in their demonstrative actions and words against immigrants, Jews, gays, Muslims, ethnic minorities and against their political opponents.

On the other side though, they often organise funds collections, distribution of food and other necessities, and volunteer if there is a natural disaster that occurs in the country. But they are charitable only with the Italians and not with foreigners. In the small village of Mura (795 inhabitants) the far-right party *Fascismo e Libertà* (Fascism and Freedom) have obtained 11%

⁷⁵<https://www.affaritaliani.it/politica/casapound-approda-a-bruxelles-di-stefano-in-parlamento-a-dire-no-europa-522289.html>

of the vote in the 2017 local elections, the same in another small centre near the city of Mantova, where the far-right party *Fasci Italiani del Lavoro* (Italian Fasci of the Workers) have managed to obtain the 10% of votes in the local elections and electing their representative Fiamma Negrini as local councillor. These new political and ideological realities tend to have as political and ideological referent the Greek Golden Dawn far-right party and are becoming increasingly popular with the lower strata of the population, especially at a local level.

These groups are quite numerous, here we enlist the most popular and active:

Casa Pound Italia (headquarters in Rome but present with several branches in the whole territory). They aspire to become a proper legitimate ultra-nationalist party on the example of the *Lega*.

Forza Nuova (headquarters in Rome but present with several branches in the whole territory. Its leader Roberto Fiore holds a seat at the European parliament)

Dodici Raggi (Twelve Rays. The name of this group refers to the SS symbol of the ‘Black Sun’) present mainly in the Veneto-Lombardia region

Manipolo d’Avanguardia (National Bunch) present in the north of the country

Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard) present in the north of the country

Fascismo e Libertà (Fascism and Freedom) present in the north of the country

Fasci Italiani del Lavoro (Italian Fasci of Work)

Militia (based in Rome)

Minor groups are instead *Veneto Fronte Skinheads* (Veneto Skinheads Front) present in Veneto and Lombardia region.

Generazione Identitaria (Identitarian Generation) Milan.

Libertà e Azione (mainly active in the north of the country).

The electoral parties of reference of these far-right political realities are parties like the *Lega* and *Fratelli d’Italia* with which they often cooperate on a local level.⁷⁶

Besides being very active in schools, universities and in deprived areas of big cities, these groups are also very active on the web. The anti-fascist association ANPI has conducted a research and found that in 2017 there were more than 3000 FaceBook pages linked to far-right

⁷⁶<https://www.ricerca.repubblica.it/archivio/repubblica/2017/07/28/xenofobia-patria-e-welfare-nasce-il-patto-trai-nuovi-parlamento12.html>. Paolo Berizzi.

extremism, 500 of which were praising openly fascism (which in Italy is a criminal offence according to the Mancino law 1993-1995).⁷⁷

The influence of these far-right groups is more evident at local level (small centres mainly), as the couple of example reported above, and on internet where they manage to attract sympathizers. The two groups that seem to have more of a national impact are *CasaPound* and *Forza Nuova* as they have managed in all those years to extend their action all over the territory from Milan to Sicily due to their organizational skills and their propaganda both on the social media and in marginalised areas of big cities, but also with proselytism in schools and universities among the students. It is still a reality in development and at national level, they are better represented by the parties of reference like the *Lega* and *Fratelli d'Italia*.

9. Public Actions of Extremists and Radical Nationalists Including Sport Fans

The far-right and neo-Nazi groups are becoming more visible in the year 2017 and there have been recorded several public actions that see involved those extremist and ultra-nationalist groups. Here below a list of the main public actions that got the attention of the media and of the public opinion.

21 January: the group *Noi con Salvini* (Us with Salvini) and *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy) demonstrate against the mayor of Rome's order to give housing to a group of immigrants in an abandoned hotel. After the end of the public demonstration, *Forza Nuova* and the other far-right organisation *Roma ai romani* (Rome to the Romans), occupied the hotel, sporting a banner on which it was written: "against migrants we are ready for the barricades".

24 January: *Forza Nuova*, *CasaPound* and *Roma ai romani* stop an Egyptian family to take possess of a council house given to them by the local authorities.

2 February: in the locality of Ostia (Rome) an Italian young man volunteer for a charity pro-immigrants is attacked by some far-right activists who were participating in a sit-in organised by *CasaPound*, *Noi con Salvini* and *Fratelli d'Italia*.

12 February: Rome: a young man is badly beaten up because has shared on FaceBook an ironic picture on *CasaPound*.

⁷⁷<https://www.patriaindipendente.it/persone-e-luoghi/inchieste/la-galassia-nera-su-facebook/> ; Cf. <https://www.anpi.it/articoli/1690/anzaldi-pd-il-reato-di-aplogia-del-fascismo-sia-applicato-anche-nei-social-network>

1 April: Milan: *Forza Nuova*'s militants break into the left-wing organization GTA's place with batons and helmets. In the evening of the same day, a group of militants belonging to *CasaPound* attacks a member of the students left-wing association *Rete degli Studenti* (Students' Network). The student is followed, attacked, beaten up and thrown into the river.

4 May: Rome: *Forza Nuova* break into the headquarters of the *Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni* (International Organization for the Migrations). One of the militants, Alessio Costantini states: "next time we won't be so nice".

6 May: Milan: *Movimento Nazionale* (National Movement) and *Gioventú Identitaria* (Generation Identity) break into the Festival Mediterraneo Downtown organised by the pro-migrants NGO COSPE.

15 June: Rome: *Forza Nuova* protests against the *ius soli* law outside Palazzo Madama (the Italian Senate seat)

28 June: Perignano (Pisa): *Forza Nuova* breaks into a church to protest against the parish priest that hosted the end of Ramadan celebration for a group of Muslims.

29 June: Milan: *CasaPound* breaks into Palazzo Marino (Milan Town Hall seat) and threaten the city mayor to protest against the local administration's politics on immigration and immigrants.

1 July: Riace (Calabria region): far-right manifestation against immigrants.

4 July: Vobarno (Brescia): a molotov is launched against an hotel that hosts immigrants.

9 July: Ostia (Rome): *CasaPound* organises a "punitive action" against the vendors on the beaches of that localities, as most of these vendors are foreigners or immigrants.⁷⁸

22 October: Rome: at the Olimpico Stadium, during the football match between Lazio AC and Cagliari AC, some Lazio supporters show a banner that portraits Anna Frank in a Roma AC football t-shirt and with stickers on which it was written: "Roma fan gay", "Roma fan Jewish".⁷⁹

25 November: Medole: Naziskins of the group Veneto Fronte Skinheads break into a public debate on immigration.

28 November: Como: 15 Naziskins of the group Veneto Fronte Skinheads break into a meeting of the volunteer association pro-migrants "Como Without Borders" and read aloud while being filmed, a statement against immigrants and the Italians that help them.⁸⁰

⁷⁸<https://www.espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/07/25/news/violenze-fascisti-1.306698>

⁷⁹Lazio AC and Roma AC are the two main football teams of the city of Rome. Traditionally, the Lazio fans are neo-fascists or far-right militants, while Roma AC fans are mainly left-wing sympathizers and militants, but it is also the football team of the Jewish Rome minority.

⁸⁰<https://www.espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/12/01/news/un-anno-di-violenza-fascista-1.315334>

8 December: the journalist Arianna Giunti is heavily threatened and offended after a publication of an article on the massive presence of far-right groups on FaceBook.

10. Hate Crime

The wave of xenophobic hate is mounting in Italy and as the previous section of this report shows, many far-right organizations and ultra-nationalist parties have been bolding enough to come to the open and manifest their ideas and political and ideological manifestos. One of the main problems for researchers on finding data on hate crime in Italy is the lack of a specific institute and agencies that collect data and publish regular reports on hate crimes as for instance, occur in other countries like Great Britain or France. After the Naziskins' break into the pro-immigrant volunteer centre (as described briefly in the previous section), the ministry of Justice Andrea Orlando has ordered a census on the situation of hate crimes occurred in the country in the last three years (2014-2017). It has been calculated an overall more than 284 violent hate crime acts as for the year 2017.

The major regions that seems interested in this type of crimes are Lazio (where Rome is), Lombardia (where Milan is), Toscana, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia. The census ordered by the minister of Justice reveals that the country is affected throughout the territory by hate crime cases, but with a different distribution of this type of crimes in the north, centre and south. The census has been conducted involving the 26 overall Appeal Court operating on national soil and include the three years (2014-2017). It has not been possible to obtain the specific data of court cases for the year 2017 only. However, we can provide the data of 557 cases of hate crime for the year 2017, including the violent hate crime acts reported above.⁸¹

This is what emerged:

Rome: 202 cases

Milan: 134 cases

Emilia Romagna (Bologna): 57 cases

Venezia: 34 cases

Torino: 31 cases

Palermo: 21 cases

⁸¹https://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Focus-N4_ilritornodellarazza.pdf To bear in mind that the data on generic hate crime obtained in this document are those collected recording all the cases of hate crime reported by the Italian media and therefore, they are not completely reliable 100%.

Catania: 14 cases
Caltanissetta: 4 cases
Campania: 27 cases (Naples: 14-Salerno: 13)
Puglia: 7 cases (Bari, Lecce, Taranto)
Calabria: 11 cases (Reggio Calabria: 8- Catanzaro:3)
Genova: 15 cases
Sardegna: 18 cases (Cagliari: 13-Sassari: 5)
Aquila: 11 cases
Perugia: 6 cases
Bolzano and Trento: 26 cases.⁸²

Obviously, these data do not include those victims who for different reasons do not report the crime to the authorities. It can be assumed that the number of hate crimes is higher than the cases treated by the Appeal Courts as enlisted above. The main reason for not reporting is that most of those victims are illegal immigrants and their concern is that if they report the crime to the police, they will be arrested or deported back. Also, it has not been possible to obtain this type of data from the official police websites and therefore, it is not possible to also provide data on hate crime committed by police forces or by the security staff in prisons on foreign national detainees. What has been noticed by many agencies and NGOs is that the general climate of hate against foreigners or religious and ethnic minorities has deepened in Italy in 2017, making the whole socio-political setting rather toxic. Some examples can be given of hate crime episodes occurred in Italy in 2017 and that have been reported by the media.

21 June: Pescara: two young men (Italian) are attacked outside the left-wing association ARCI, when the attackers are arrested, they proudly declare themselves as “fascist and racist”.

30 June: Tor Bella Monaca (Rome): a Bengalese citizen is attacked and badly beaten by four Italian men because he had obtained regularly and by the local authorities the council house for himself and his family.

29 October: Rome: the Bangladesh citizen Kortik Chondro has been attacked “because black” (the attackers all between 17 and 19 years of age and militants of Forza Nuova)

⁸²https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14.wp; <https://www.ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2018/02/11/i-mille-crimini-dodio-che-avvelenano-litalia06.html>

7 November: Ostia (Rome): the TV state journalist Daniele Piervincenzi is badly attacked and beaten by a local gangster close to CasaPound while in the area for a report on the alleged links between CasaPound and the local organised crime.

As said, the above are just few examples of the type of hate crime that in 2017 started to affect also Italians who for political/ideological reasons, or, simply because they volunteer for pro-immigrants' organizations, are attacked verbally and physically by far-right militants and ultra-nationalist party members. It has not been recorded any inter-ethnic clashes or terrorist action in the year 2017.

11. Glorification of German National Socialism and Collaborators of Nazi Germany

Italy is a peculiar case among those countries that experienced a Nazi-fascist regime more than eighty years ago. The reason for such peculiarity lies upon the fact that up to today, in many – or even-all-cities and small towns of Italy, there are many relics of the Fascist regime as buildings and entire areas of cities like the EUR in Rome. Many small towns created by the Mussolini's regime are still there as Latina, Sabaudia (in the Lazio region) and other urban centres scattered throughout the country. Besides monuments that portrait the Duce in many cities and centres.

In addition, it has been explained already in many occasions (see report Italy 2016), the legislation on this matter is rather vague and incomplete and if in the year 2017 there is the “Fiano” law to re-enforce the already existing “Scelba” law (1956) and the “Mancino” law (1993-1995), there is still space for nostalgic fascists or far-right militants to glorify fascism, Mussolini and his regime. In the year 2017, there were recorded several episodes of this kind. The first one was the presence of several fascist and neo-Nazi in the *campo 10*, Cemetery of Milan on 29 April 2017, who gathered there against the law, to pay tribute to Mussolini's grave. Few days before, the same group of nostalgic fascists and far-right militants had gathered in Milan for a counter-demonstration against the anniversary and day of national celebration from the Nazi-fascist forces and which occurs every 25 April and is a national holiday.

This group of neo-fascists therefore, organised a counter event sporting Celtic crosses, Nazi salute, and commemorating those Nazi-fascists who died during the WWII and that were militants of the Social Republic of Saló (1943-1945). Also, on 19 July, there were

demonstrations by some militants of the far-right groups against the decision taken by the local authorities to re-name a local park to two Italian magistrates killed by the Mafia in 1992, instead of leaving the original park name that was entitled to Arnaldo Mussolini, brother of the Duce.⁸³

In the summer 2017, became popular the news regarding the owner of a private beach open to the public that had entitled the beach as “Spiaggia Fascista” (Fascist Beach) and that was deciding who could have access to the beach according to political personal views, colour of the skin, ethnicity and religion. The beach had also many posters with Mussolini image and other fascist memorabilia, plus openly offensive and racist slogans all around.⁸⁴ Finally, worth of mention is the headline of the daily newspaper *Il Tempo* who declare on 30 December, “Mussolini Man of the Year” with a long article written by the neo-fascist intellectual Marcello Veneziani, in which were enlisted the political and individual qualities of the Duce and how the Italians would need somebody like him to govern the country in this particular moment.⁸⁵

These are few examples of glorification of fascism in a country already affected by the fascist virus. The post war constitution, the establishing of a new liberal democratic regime, and the legislation on fascist propaganda and ideology have not fought enough to take the country through a full process of de-Nazification as in Germany. The results are still tolerance of certain fascist nostalgia, the allowing of the selling of fascist souvenirs as it happens in Mussolini’s birthplace Predappio, the facility by which nostalgic fascists and far-right militants are openly breaching the law and hoping that a new Mussolini and a new Fascist regime would soon come to solve the problems of the Italians.

12. Persecution of Human Rights Activists

If by persecution of human rights activists we intend the action against those associations by the Italian authorities, the only initiative is the one taken by the minister of the interior Marco Minniti in 2017 and is that the NGOs that rescue migrants in the Mediterranean sea must be registered and accredited by the Italian authorities otherwise, they can be arrested or deterred from the rescue operations.⁸⁶ This resolution has been criticised by the several NGOs but the reason is these restrictions are due to security reasons and to contain or stop the human

⁸³<https://www.espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/12/01/news/un-anno-di-violenza-fascista-1.315334>

⁸⁴https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/11/23/news/chioggia-spiaggia_fascista-archiviazione-181923626

⁸⁵<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/12/30/benito-mussolini-uomo-dellanno-2017-il-tempo-dedica-la-primapagina-al-duce/4066200>

⁸⁶<https://www.ilpost.it/2017/04/04/migranti-minniti/>

trafficking in that area. If instead by persecution of human rights activists is intended the harassment by far-right organisations the situation is different. In 2017, the volunteers of associations or NGOs that work for cooperation, pro-migrants and pro-multiculturalism in the country have been the targets of violence online and physical by militants of several far-right groups.

The episode already reported in this research (section 11) of a group of Naziskins that break into a meeting of a pro-immigrants' volunteer association in November, gives the pulse on how has become dangerous to be a human right activist in Italy. According to a report published on 14 February by the UN, there is an increase of what in the report are called "solidarity crimes", meaning, helping immigrants or refugees when they arrive illegally in the country.

The report also points out how these organisations are constantly de-legitimised by the official media and how the public opinion does not show any more solidarity to their initiative, considering them subversive figures that wish to smuggle in the country and to defend immigrants who are also perceived as criminals. Overall in 2017, the reputation of human rights activists has been tarnished with fake news and misinformation especially on internet. This has contributed to create a false image of volunteers and activists for human rights never experienced before in the country.⁸⁷

13. Conclusion

The year 2017 has seen a worsening of the country's general socio-political conditions. This is due to many factors like financial and economic crisis, a weak and inefficient government, absence of the authorities on the territory, high level of un-employment and under-development of certain regions (the south of the country), and a widespread distrust in the future. These elements have seen augmenting the action, impact and presence of ultra-nationalist parties and movements like the *Lega* and the *Movimento 5 Stelle* at a national and local level, and the re-enforcement of the presence on a local level of far-right organizations.

The overall population seems to suffer from the so called "ignorance index" and has increasingly become xenophobic and racist by and large. The most worrying element that has emerged is that racist and xenophobic ideas and attitudes once shared only by a small group,

⁸⁷<https://www.osservatoriodiritti.it/2018/02/20/diritti-umani-attacco-difensori-diritti-umani-migranti/>

are now shared by the majority of the population without distinction between age, gender, or geography.

The widespreading of hate speech is evident especially on internet and on social platforms like FaceBook where the language of hate is not just addressing ethnic and religious minorities, foreigners or immigrants but also (and this is an element of novelty) other Italians who dissent from what seems to be the national trend. The creation of this climate of intolerance is partly due to the political class as *Lega* and *Fratelli d'Italia* parties (far-right and neo-fascist political realities) and partly to the colluded media system, with which tailored TV programmes contribute to instigate into the viewers the fear of the Other, associating daily immigrants with crime, criminalising Roma-Sinti communities and spreading the suspect toward the Muslim minorities present on the territory. In addition, far-right movement like *CasaPound* and *Forza Nuova* are becoming increasingly accredited with the local population, while volunteer pro-immigrant groups, human rights activists are becoming less accepted by the public opinion because associated with left-leaning ideology or simply vilified because of their defending minorities and immigrants.

At the moment of the writing (2018) Italy has a new populist far-right government and the situation in the country has worsened further not just for immigrants and minorities, but also for Italians who are starting to oppose the common ultra-nationalist political trend that seems to dominate the current political debate. The future for Italy does not look promising.

Recommendations

The main recommendation that can be done in the light of what examined, is that the official political institutions should start to act according to the constitution when legislating on matter of civil and human rights. The main concern is the “Minniti-Orlando” law that should regulate the immigration in the country. As already explained and discussed in this report, there are many flaws that need to be addressed in matter of refugee/immigrant (legal and illegal) status. People cannot be detained in centres whose general conditions do not fulfil the basic human rights and hygienic norms.

Also, to block the landing of immigrants or refugees goes against the international law (Geneva convention on refugees 1951) and the European laws (Dublin agreement 2013). The Italian authorities, although being Italy one of the few countries that has to handle the immigrants’

emergency in the Mediterranean, must nevertheless obey by those laws. Also, another recommendation is that the Italian government should clarify and maybe re-enforce the current legislation on hate speech and hate crime as the current legislation on this matter has many loopholes that allow neo-fascists and far-right movements to go through and therefore continuing with their ultra-nationalist and racist propaganda.

All these recommendations though, will be very unlikely to be implemented by the current government (2018) as its agenda has already made clear at the moment of writing by closing the frontiers to immigrants and refugees, negotiating a possible Italexit from the EU, and looking at countries like Hungary as a government model in matter of civil and human rights affecting its own citizens.