



2008-2019: eleven years of ordinary racism in Italy

by Grazia Naletto

7,426 are the cases of discrimination and racism that we documented between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2020. Among them, 901 are the stories of people who have been offended, insulted, threatened, beaten or even killed for belonging to a stigmatized, despised, dehumanized minority.

Among them are Abdul Salam Guibre, killed in Milan on September 14, 2008, officially for a biscuit theft; Kwame Antwi Julius Francis (31), Affun Yeboa Eric (25), Christopher Adams (28), El Hadji Ababa, Samuel Kwako (26), Jeemes Alex, 28 and Joseph Ayimbora, victims of the racist mafia laughter in Castel Volturno on September 18, 2008; Emmanuel Bonsu, beaten to death "by mistake" by a group of traffic policemen in Parma on 28 September 2008; Alina Bonar Diaciuk, left to die in a police station at Villa Opicina on 16 April 2012; Muhammad Shahzad Khan, beaten to death in Rome on September 18, 2014 because he had disturbed the quiet of the neighborhood with his prayers; Emmanuel Chidi Namdi, killed on the streets of Fermo on July 5, 2016, because he dared to react to an insult addressed to his partner; Wilson Kofi, 20 years old, Omar Fadera, 23 years old, Gideon Azeke, 25 years old, Jennifer Otiotio, 25 years old, Mahmadou Touré, 28 years old, Festus Omagbon, 32 years old, all wounded during the racist raid carried out by the "avenger" Luca Traini in Macerata on 3 February 2018; Soumaila Sacko, shot dead in San Calogero on 8 June 2018.

7,426. That's a high number. And yet, we know it is approximate by default. Xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and ziganophobia are difficult to quantify, given that a majority of injustices, discrimination and racist violence remain confined to



the invisibility of the silence of those who suffer them and to the silence of the many who watch passively and, therefore, also accomplices.

The number, however, is one we must underscore in order to fulfill the commitment we made when, in 2009, we published our first white paper and, again, when, in 2011, we began to make available online the information collected, on the website cronachediordinariorazzismo.org: to tell the daily racism, case by case, day by day, trying to restore humanity and memory to women and men who suffer it on their own skin, often reduced to a name and a surname mentioned in a brief local news report, with no mention of the discriminatory nature of the violations suffered.

We have been doing this for twelve years with the aim of breaking down the wall of denial, omission and removal¹, which for too long has inhibited the Italian public debate on discrimination and xenophobic and racist violence, treated punctually and systematically as acts of isolated individuals (maybe with mental problems).

The number 7,426 serves us, therefore, first and foremost to remind us that xenophobia and racism, far from being extraordinary and impromptu phenomena attributable to lone wolves, have been rooted in our country for a long time and are part of a context, i.e. they are social, structured, ordinary and systemic phenomena, in which collective actors play a central role: institutions, parties and media operators, first and foremost. Institutional racism has always attracted our attention, in the belief that forms of media and popular racism largely stem from it².

A methodological premise

In order to organize our work, we have first of all shared a definition of racism, indicating with this term "any theory, ideology, idea, attitude, statement, act and behaviour

1 These are real communicative strategies that structure and sediment the words of racism as G. Faso well explains, "La lingua del razzismo: alcune parole chiave", in G. Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, Manifestolibri, Rome 2009, pp. 29-36.

2 On the systemic nature of racism Annamaria Rivera: *Regole e roghi*, Dedalo, Bari 2009, *Razzismo. Gli atti, le parole, la propaganda*, Dedalo, Bari, 2020.



that aims to legitimize, incite, instigate or commit discrimination, abuse, harassment, threats, verbal or physical violence against individuals or groups under the pretext of their national or ethnic origin, religious beliefs and practices or gender, age, somatic traits, sexual orientation, state of ability, real or alleged cultural difference". We have, therefore, narrowed our scope of observation to the racism that affects citizens of foreign origin on an individual or group level because of their nationality or national or ethnic origin, their religious beliefs and practices, their somatic traits, customs, cultural practices, value systems and beliefs, other than majority or presumed majority ones.

Using this definition, we have designed and structured the online database separating discrimination, verbal and physical violence and harm that has a xenophobic and racist matrix, to offer a brief description of what happened and some basic information (the date and place of the event, the source of the information). Much more information could be collected, but we are not able to detect it in all cases: the motive and scope of the discrimination, the profiles of the victims and aggressors (age, nationality), the individual or collective character of the act/behaviour; the possible political affiliation of the aggressors.

The gathering of data is carried out through daily monitoring of the press and reports received online by victims, witnesses, NGOs and civil rights groups. In recent years, an additional source of information, used with due caution, is offered by the various social networks.

Although based on a well established system of sources, the monitoring work is influenced by internal and external factors. The greater attention paid to specific forms of racism in different phases³, media trends which alternates periods of over-representation and moments of total removal of discrimination and racist violence, the limitation of access to the archives of some newspapers, especially local ones, are all factors that impact the results of our work.

³ We have dedicated specific papers to the analysis of racist propaganda in 2014, protests against reception in 2017, institutional discrimination in 2018, political hate speech in 2019.



For all these reasons our database is conceived as a memory repository of discrimination and racist violence. It is not a database from which data can be extrapolated to produce statistically representative elaborations.

It would be easy to make a quantitative interpretation, as many do on the basis of much less information than the one we gather, but it would not be correct from a deontological point of view. What we can propose more modestly is a reasoned account of that part of everyday racism that we are able to document.

We do so, in the second part of this report, starting with a brief reconstruction of political and institutional racism and twenty-two examples of ordinary racism that we chose following two main threads.

First, some of the most serious racist incidents have had a judicial follow-up, this marks a difference with eleven years ago, when we published our first White Paper. It seemed useful to reconstruct the motivations that led some judges to recognise the discriminatory, xenophobic or racist nature of the violations committed.

We highlight other cases with the aim to exemplify the complexity and plurality of the interactions that can develop between physical and verbal violence, political and virtual debate and concrete social behaviours, institutional statements and mainstream media information, editorial choices and public opinion orientation. The tendency to focus, sometimes rhetorically, on the racist discourse much more than on physical violence, leads us to stress the complementarity between words and deeds that characterizes much racism in Italy during the last decade.

2008-2011: the normative legitimacy of xenophobia and racism

The first phase coincides with the entry into office of the Berlusconi IV⁴ Government which, introducing a *security bill* drafted by the then Ministry of Interior Maroni, inaugurates to all intents and purposes what we in 2009 called *a process of institutional and norma-*

⁴ Berlusconi IV: May 8, 2008/November 16, 2011.



tive legitimization of discrimination and racism. The "Maroni package" takes up the project started in 2002 with the approval of Law No. 189, better known as the "Bossi-Fini Law", introducing the crime of illegal entry and stay and the one providing for an aggravating penalty for crimes committed by foreign citizens without documents, the choice to treat the legal condition of the foreigner with a "special jurisprudence" that has public security at its core⁵.

The security package, apart from intervening in many aspects of foreign citizen's life, is a set of "manifest" regulations which have the principal purpose of transmitting a precise political and cultural message to the public opinion: that of the will to restrict, compress, sacrifice the rights of foreign citizens in order to favour, no matter what, their rejection, expulsion, exclusion. The message is that of "zero tolerance" towards "irregular" immigration, but also of the institutional rejection of foreigners as such, explicit and programmed at all levels. Having given mayors special powers in matters of urban security, as Law No. 94/2009 does, declines the policies of rejection also at the local level⁶.

Between August 9, 2008 and March 9, 2009, ANCI (the Municipalities Association) surveyed more than 600 local ordinances in this realm. This is, in many cases, what Bontempelli called the "grotesque side of racism"⁷, which unfortunately soon takes on a less bizarre face, limiting the access of foreign citizens to many welfare benefits or clearing dozens of Roma camps, without providing alternative housing solutions. Few examples: the municipalities of Brescia, Palazzago, Adro, Latisana, Tradate and the Lombardy Region have restricted the access of foreign citizens to new born services; the municipality of Villa D'Ogna restricted the access to unemployment benefits; the municipality of Milan excluded foreigners from economic contributions for low-income families; the municipalities

⁵ A. Caputo, "Immigrazione e politiche del diritto: dal testo unico del 1998 ai recenti interventi sulla sicurezza", in G. Naletto, cit., pp. 97-104.

⁶ It is precisely the decision to increase the powers of mayors in the field of urban security that links this and the subsequent security packages adopted at the initiative of the former Interior Ministers Minniti (2017) and Salvini (2018-2019).

⁷ S. Bontempelli, "Ordinanza pazza. I Sindaci e il versante grottesco del razzismo", in G. Naletto, cit., pp. 113-122.



of Adro, Ciampino, Montecchio Maggiore and Goito restricted excluded foreign children from childcare; the municipalities of Alzano Lombardo, Adro, Majano, and the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region did not give foreigners any rent support contribution⁸.

A series of incidents such as those is in this context of political and institutional legitimization of racism, combined with a media discourse that too often associates immigration and criminality⁹, that the Ponticelli pogrom, for example, and the murder of Abdul Guibre in Milan¹⁰ are placed, the mafia massacre of Castel Volturno, the institutional beating of Emmanuel Bonsu¹¹, the media havoc about the "monsters" of the Caffarella, two innocent men who were exposed as rapists¹², the shots against the farm workers of Rosarno¹³, the incendiary attack on Navtej Singh¹⁴, the suicide of Nourredine Adnane in Palermo¹⁵ and the murder of Imad El Kaalouli¹⁶.

⁸ I. Traina, "Discriminazioni e accesso al welfare: la giurisprudenza di merito", in Lunaria (a cura di), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Edizioni dell'Asino, Roma 2011, pp. 82-91. A. Guariso, "Stranieri e accesso alle prestazioni sociali. Normativa europea e nazionale. Schede pratiche", Asgi, 2008: <https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Stranieri-e-accesso-alle-prestazioni-sociali.pdf>.

⁹ See Paola Barretta essay in Part 1

¹⁰ Abdul Guibre, 19 years old, was shot dead by the owners of a bar, father and son, in via Zuretti on September 14, 2008 in Milan. The boy allegedly entered the bar with two friends and stole a pack of cookies. The managers of the bar chase him in the street and hit him repeatedly on the head. They were convicted for aggravated voluntary manslaughter, but the racist aggravating circumstance was ruled out immediately by the investigators, despite some witnesses spoke of racist insults directed at the boy during the assault. See: G. Faso, "The Killing of Abdul Guibre", in G. Naletto, cit., pp. 72-74, and an update published on our website: "No futile cookies", available here: <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/non-futili-biscotti/>.

¹¹ See later in this section the files dedicated to the reconstruction of the first sentence for racist mafia massacre and the long judicial process that followed the attack to Emmanuel Bonsu.

¹² See G. Naletto, "La violenza della Caffarella", in G. Naletto, cit., pp. 83-87.

¹³ See later in this report, the Veronica Iesué case.

¹⁴ Navtej Singh, a 35-year-old Indian citizen, was first insulted, then beaten, then set on fire in Nettuno on the night between January 31 and February 1, 2009, while lying on a bench at the train station. The authors are three young people aged 16, 19 and 29. See: P. Andrisani, "The violence suffered by Navtej Singh", in Naletto G., cit., pp. 79-82.

¹⁵ Nourredine Adnane, a 27-year-old street vendor, set himself on fire in Palermo on February 16, 2011 after yet another request to move made by a fireman. The sales license in his possession did not entitle him to sell where he was, but according to some witnesses, he was literally persecuted by the firefighters. See: "The suicide of Nourredine Adnane", in Lunaria (ed.), *Chronicles of ordinary racism. Second White Paper on Racism in Italy*, Edizioni dell'Asino, Rome 2011, pp. 156-157.

¹⁶ Imad El Kaalouli, was killed on 28 June 2011 in Desenzano del Garda by shots fired by his former employer, the owner of a restaurant. Imad had travelled there with a labour consultant to claim his entitlements. See: "The murder of Imad El Kaalouli, in Lunaria (edited by), *Chronicles of ordinary racism. Second white paper on racism in Italy*, Edizioni dell'Asino, Rome 2011, pp. 169-170.



*Monti's government diplomatic racism*¹⁷

The establishment of the Monti government opens phase that we might call "diplomatic" institutional racism. Italy was at the height of the economic and social effects of the 2008 global crisis, the structural limits of the Belpaese development model and the austerity recipes imposed by the European Union bring the priority of containing debt and public deficit at the centre of the political agenda. The sudden growth in the arrivals of migrants by sea recorded in 2011 stops temporarily (in 2012, only a little more than 13,000 migrants arrived on Italian coasts) and resumes especially from autumn 2013¹⁸.

These circumstances push migrations and security to the margins of public debate while racism is played out as a marginal phenomenon, at least until the birth of Letta Government, which takes office in April 2013. The technical government marks a break with its predecessor, in terms of public rhetoric, less aggressive and fairer when dealing with foreign citizens and minorities. But formal correctness is not accompanied by significant initiatives at the regulatory level, with the exception of the umpteenth regularization measure adopted in 2012, whose selective nature confirms the ideas behind previous migration policies.

The Monti government was the first to dismiss the proposed reform of the citizenship law delivered to the House of Representatives in March 2012. It was the Prime Minister himself who put it in a drawer saying that putting it to a floor vote would pose risks to the stability of the majority, leaving the public debate on the subject of *ius soli* to the sole propaganda of the Northern League and the media or the far right. The government also appealed against the decision of the Milanese judges who agreed with Asgi (the Association for giuridical studies on immigration) and "Avvocati per niente" (a group of *pro bono*

¹⁷ November 16, 2011/April 20, 2013

¹⁸ Data on arrivals of migrants by sea are published by the Ministry of the Interior in the Daily Statistics Dashboard. Only the most recent years are available online <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero>.



lawyers) that young foreigners could not be excluded from participating to the National Civil Service program¹⁹. Violations by law enforcement agencies also happened under the watch of the technical government. Among the most serious, we recall what Francesco Sperandeo reported on April 17, 2012 when two migrants destined for repatriation were immobilized, patched and disguised on a regular flight²⁰, the particularly violent arrest carried out against a Somali refugee in Rome²¹ and, above all, the suicide of Alina Bonar Diachuk at only 32 years of age²².

Racist slur, the rightwing winning weapon

Racist propaganda returns to the forefront after the 2013 general election and the inauguration of the Letta²³ government. It is no accident that it chose two women to exercise all its virulence. Cecile Kyenge, the first black minister of the Republic, and Laura Boldrini, Speaker of the House, are the targets: the first for her foreign origin and skin colour, the second for her past role as Unhcr spokesperson for Southern Europe. The continuous verbal attacks against them opened the way to the uninhibited propagation of violent, sexist, xenophobic and racist rhetoric that in the following years seemed to find no boundaries.

19 S. Chiodo, "Servizio (in)civile", in Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Terzo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Lunaria, 2014, pp.195-199.

20 On April 17, 2012, Francesco Sperandeo, a young film-maker, boards the Alitalia Rome-Tunisi flight at 9.20 am. On the plane he notices the presence of two Algerian citizens, accompanied by police officers in plain clothes. The two migrants are seated separately, at the back of the plane, immobilized hands and feet, gagged with brown parcel tape over their mouths, covered by a sanitary mask. When asked for information, both flight attendants and State Police officers respond by ordering Sperandeo to sit down, reassuring him of the "normality" of the operation in progress. The young man manages, however, to secretly take a photograph and publishes it on Facebook.

21 On July 10, 2012 in Rome, in the San Lorenzo district, four plainclothes carabinieri stopped a 22-year-old Somali political refugee in Rome, asking for his identity without showing any identification card. When he refused, the military tried to handcuff him to take him to the police post, then they block him against a shutter, while his screams attracting the attention of passers-by who ask to let him go. The young man, lying on the ground, has an epileptic attack. An ambulance transports him to the hospital. According to the medical report, he had suffered a head injury and a contusion on his chest and left elbow. The fact is documented by a video recorded by a witness and published on the *Corriere della Sera* website.

22 On April 16, 2012, Alina, a 32-year-old Ukrainian citizen, committed suicide in the police station of Villa Opicina, a small village close to Trieste, by tying a rope to the radiator of the cell where she had been locked up two days earlier. See Paola Andrisani's chapter dedicated to the reconstruction of this case.

23 April 28, 2013/February 22, 2014.



In the year in which the arrivals of migrants by sea are growing again and the massacres are multiplying, Pope Francis' visit to Lampedusa on July 9th, shakes up the world of the media and only temporarily restores a little bit of fairness and humanity to a public discourse on migration once again flattened on the cynical count of arrivals²⁴. The Pope's message echo did not last long. On October the 3rd when 366 migrants died in the shipwreck of a fishing boat south of the Bay of Rabbits in Lampedusa, symbolically represents the beginning of a European political crisis that began on migration and asylum policies reached its climax in the following years²⁵.

The inauguration of the search and rescue mission Mare Nostrum carried out by Italian authorities alone, is the only active policy that tries to stop these tragedies. It did last one year, then it was closed in October 2014 by the new Renzi government²⁶. In the meantime, two and a half months after that unspeakable tragedy, a video shot from a mobile phone showed migrants standing naked in the open air in the middle of winter, exposed to the jet of a pump for what will be presented as an "anti-scabies treatment"²⁷.

The increase in the number of people rescued was met by the total unpreparedness and highlighted a few critical points. This was especially true during the 2014 European elections campaign during which migrations were the main topic discussed and, of course, the main issue against which the rightwing parties used their xenophobic propaganda. Invasion, health hazard, Islamophobia and the unsustainability of the costs of migration were all issues at the centre of the election campaign of Lega and Fratelli d'Italia. The election result was less favourable to the right than feared, but Euroscepticism, xenophobia and racism would dominate the public debate in the years to come.

24 D. Zola, "Il papa va a Lampedusa", in Lunaria (Ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Terzo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Lunaria, 2014, pp.140-143.

25 G. Caldiron, "Non solo euroscettici. Nell'Europa della crisi, la xenofobia mette radici nelle urne", in Lunaria (Ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Terzo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Lunaria, 2014, pp. 23-31.

26 February 22, 2014/December 12, 2016.

27 The video was broadcast by Valerio Cataldi on December 16, 2013 on TG2; they were shot by the brother of a migrant hosted in the center, who went to the island to search for him. The video can still be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caoJKYWnQQM>.



Precisely by leveraging the dysfunctions and cases of mismanagement in the reception system, the Northern League had the opportunity to come out of its temporary isolation due to the scandals that caused the resignation of its previous leadership, and to gradually gain media and political space and visibility.

The whole of 2014 was marked by an obsessive and hammering campaign against the reception system with coordinated press statements of national leaders and demonstrations organised by Casa Pound and Forza Nuova. On July 12, the leader of the Northern League made a spectacular visit to the Cara di Mineo to ask for its closure²⁸; in December, Forza Nuova displayed banners and posters against the “reception business” in Palermo, Udine and Gorizia and encouraged protests such as the one against a reception centre for minors in Tor Sapienza in November 2014;

CasaPound puts up posters of the same tone in Bari. The press reported on the “Mafia Capitale” investigation, released in December 2014, offer a further opportunity to attack the public reception system²⁹. It is thanks to these months of new visibility (and legitimacy) regained that, on February 15, 2015, Matteo Salvini can make official the goal of transforming the Northern League into a national party, thanks to the alliance with the extreme right movements in Central and Southern Italy, first and foremost CasaPound and Forza Nuova.

From this moment on, the media visibility of the Lega Nord representatives is on the rise. That “Roma are the scum of society” repeated several times amid public applause by an MEP from the Lega Nord, during a major television broadcast on 2 March 2015, is just one perfect example on how racist discourse can easily be flaunted and publicly

28 Salvini will return to Mineo on March 16, 2015 and then as minister on July 9, 2019 to flaunt the goal achieved. The Mineo affair is unique: its closure has been requested by the anti-racist movement ever since it was opened by another Minister from the Lega, Maroni, in 2011. For eight years, the request remained unheeded by all governments, despite the fact that the management of the centre had been the subject of several investigations. Until Salvini decided to make it the symbol of his propaganda against immigrants.

29 See: Lunaria, *Il mondo di dentro. Il sistema per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati* a Roma, 2016, disponi: http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Il_mondo_di_dentro.pdf



claimed³⁰. Ostentation of such ideas will become the attitude of right wing elected officials in the following years. Same for media and ordinary citizens, with the increasingly decisive role played by the Web³¹.

The inability to reach an agreement of migration issues inside the European Union, and a media system that offered a platform to the public discourse against migrants, helped create a favourable ground for the involution and polarization of public debate and the popular rooting of intolerance and racism. This climate was softened for a few weeks by the image of the body of little Aylan, found on the beach of Bodrum on September 3, 2015. The Welcome slogan that did spread in Italy and Europe, while thousands of people travelled along the Balkan Route, soon found its Italian counterpart in the "Refugees not welcome" slogan on banners displayed by Forza Nuova in various cities in 2016³², and by CasaPound in 2017³³.

Their demonstrations are generally not much participated, but they are loud and visible but they contribute to generate intolerance in public opinion: we counted more than 210 more or less spontaneous local protests against reception projects in 2016 alone³⁴.

30 The MEP is the late Gianluca Buonanno, hosted in the studio during an episode of "Piazza Pulita". The quoted sentence is pronounced several times during the conversation with Dijana Pavlovic, Serbian actress and Roma activist. Following an anti-discrimination appeal brought by Naga and Asgi, Buonanno was convicted of harassment by the Court of Milan in April 2016. The judge acknowledged that associating the term "scum" with the Roma ethnic group "is not only highly offensive and detrimental to the dignity of the addressees, but also has an undoubted discriminatory value". For a detailed reconstruction of what happened, see: G. Naletto, "Piazza Pulita: the search for an audience opens a door to racism", in Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo. Fourth white paper on racism in Italy, 2017*, pp. 86-91.

31 Some newspapers not only showcase the most stigmatising political statements, but also act as a driving force behind disinformation and the spread of intolerance. Two examples: *Libero* headlines ("Islamic Butchers" and "Islamic Bastards" in January 2015) or *il Giornale* ("Let's drive Islam out of our home" of March 2016) and an example of incitement to violence ("React with violence" *Libero*, April 2017).

32 In Genoa on 4 February 2016, in Verona on 29 August 2016, in Monza on 6 September 2016, in Atesa (CH) on 19 February 2016.

33 In Barletta on July 19, 2017 and in Vercelli on July 28, 2017.

34 The rejection is expressed in different ways: with simple verbal statements, with posters, banners, flyers up to the organization of public initiatives (petitions, open letters, demonstrations). See: Lunaria (edited by), *Accoglienza. La propaganda e le proteste del rifiuto. Le scelte istituzionali sbagliate, 2017*, disponibile qui: http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/0FOCUS1_DEFINITIVO_13



Meanwhile, the European Migration Agenda does not solve the existing conflicts between the countries of Southern, Eastern and Northern Europe. The solution that was chosen is once again the securitarian one, sanctioned on March 18, 2016, with the shameful cooperation agreement with Turkey which, in line with the European strategy of outsourcing the right of asylum, blocks a large number of Syrian asylum seekers outside the European borders and succeeds in curbing the Balkan Route, but not the South-Western Mediterranean. It is in this deeply polarized atmosphere, we witness the murder of Emmanuel Chidi Namdi, a 39-year-old Nigerian asylum seeker, killed in Fermo on July 5, 2016 by Amedeo Mancini, another extreme right devotee³⁵.

From the criminalization of solidarity to open institutional racism

"I've had this idea for a long time: to dispel the taboo that security policies are "par excellence" from the right. It is true that often a securitarian impulse in society and public opinion produces a shift of the electorate to the right, but I have always been convinced that security is bread and butter for the left. Modern security policies are integrated: not only repression, as the right conceives it, not only interventions of social recovery, as a part of the Left believed. And only a reformist left-wing political culture which does not simplify the answers can put into play the attempt of an integrated solution to the demand for security". This is an excerpt from an interview given to the Espresso by the new Interior Minister Marco Minniti on January 9, 2017.

It is important to recall it because with a highly visible media operation, the Minister announced a new squeeze on migration policies. He did so with a strongly symbolic choice: dwelling on the idea of social security, the historical heritage of the left, to declare its failure. And this while admitting that security policies bring a "shift to the right of the electorate". This umpteenth ideal surrender to the right wing Sicuritarianism will favour,

35 See: S. Chiodo, "L'omicidio di Fermo", in Lunaria (a cura di), *Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo. Quarto libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, 2017, pp. 175-180.



instead of holding it back, the return of the right to the Government and the coming to what we could define the "open institutional racism" of its successor.

The link is given by the claimed choice of assertively associating the migration phenomenon with security policies. The neo-minister used an apparently "responsible" and balanced rhetoric, and therefore, reassuring, thanks to the promise of combining "severity" and "reception".

Reality would be different

In February 2017, the Minister issued two administrative orders reforming the international protection procedure, abolishing the second level of appeal, restricting the judicial protection of asylum seekers and introducing "voluntary" work for guests of reception centres; proposing the extension of the system of Identification and Expulsion Centres (CIEs); allocating new resources for repatriation operations and increasing the powers of mayors on urban security matters³⁶.

International cooperation is bent to blocking migratory flows. Two new agreements with the Interior Ministers of Chad and Libya, an agreement with the Fezzan Tribes of Southern Libya and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Favez Mustafa Serraj's Libyan Government of National Reconciliation aspire to greater cooperation in controlling migration flows in the country. Four patrol boats were sent to the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy ships in Libyan waters to support the surveillance at sea and on borders. A meeting with 13 Libyan mayors aimed to fortify the borders of the South of the country in exchange for resources in addition to those promised to Niger for the same purpose³⁷.

36 The two decrees were converted into law in April 2017. They are the Law April 13, 2017, no. 46, converting, with amendments, the Law Decree of February 17, 2017, no. 13, on "Urgent provisions for the acceleration of proceedings in the field of international protection, as well as for the fight against illegal immigration" and the Law April 18, 2017, no. 48, converting, with amendments, the Law Decree of February 20, 2017, no. 14 on "Urgent provisions on city security".

37 See: M. Ludovico, "Minniti rilancia sulla Libia con una dote di 200 milioni", *Ristretti orizzonti*, available here: <http://www.ristretti.org/Le-Notizie-di-Ristretti/migranti-minniti-rilancia-sulla-libia-con-una-dote-di-200-milioni>.



Not a word of condemnation comes from the Minister when, on February 23, 2017, two Roma women are locked up in a cage in Follonica, mocked and filmed, and the video made waves on the Net with hundreds of shares and racist comments³⁸.

On the other hand, NGOs providing aid at sea are being blackmailed by imposing a Code of Conduct³⁹, thus legitimising the campaign of criminalisation that stigmatises the search&rescue operations as "water taxis", accusing them of facilitating the arrival of migrants and, therefore, of carrying out "illegal" activities. All this is supported by an aggressive communication campaign that succeeds in further polarising the public debate on the solidarity work in the Mediterranean.

It is also the Gentiloni government who has permanently wiped out the reform of the citizenship law.

At the end of 2017, the number of arrivals of migrants from the South Mediterranean will be halved: 23,526 people arrived in June, only 2,268 those arrived in December.

Not even the raid carried out by Luca Traini in Macerata⁴⁰ (six black people injured), on February 3 2018, induces the Minister of the Interior to leave behind the rhetoric about security. On the contrary, the episode is defined as an individual initiative, certainly to be condemned, without, however, connecting it to the problem of the growing spread of xenophobia and racism, nor to the renewed protagonism relaunch of extreme right.

As we have already mentioned, an attempt was being made to stop the organisation of a national antiracist demonstration in the city. The result is once again to delegitimise the anti-racist movement and solidarity initiatives.

38 See: A. Dotti, "Follonica: la gabbia del disprezzo", in Lunaria (a cura di), *Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo. Quarto libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, 2017, pp. 190-193, and the pages on this report by Roberta Salzano.

39 See: G. Naletto, "ONG: il buio in fondo al tunnel", in Lunaria (a cura di), *Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo, Quarto libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, 2017, pp. 119-132.

40 See the pages by Grazia Naletto on this report.



The elections of March 4, 2018 sanctioned the success of the Northern League and the 5 Star Movement, which led to the troubled launch of the Conte I ⁴¹ government; Matteo Salvini will become Minister of the Interior.

The new Minister wastes no time and activates his communication machine in support of various administrative and regulatory measures that, in the course of a few months, deeply limit the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. The year in which the new Minister took office stands out as one with an abnormal recurrence of racist attacks towards black people.

Following on his predecessor footsteps, the Minister closed Italian ports to the NGOs ships engaged in Search and Rescue missions; he called on the police authorities, the National Commission for the Right of Asylum and the chairmen of the Territorial Commissions to "reduce the number of cases of recognition of humanitarian protection"⁴². Salvini also reorganised the reception system with the aim of "rationalising" it and "reducing its costs" and approved a new set of rules for the management of the centres⁴³. The local and widespread reception network managed by the municipalities (ex SPRAR) is weakened.

Yet another "security" package is launched with two measures.

Decree Law no. 113/2018 was converted into Law no. 132 on December 3, 2018. The most significant changes introduced by the decree are known: abrogation of the humanitarian reasons protection visa; provision of "special" permits for medical treatment (of 6 months), for natural disasters and for acts of particular civil value (of 1 year), not convertible into a residence permit for work; extension of the hypothesis of detention of asylum seekers for the verification of identity and citizenship and doubling the period of detention in the CPR from 90 to 180 days; weakening of the ordinary reception system SPRAR

41 June 1st 2018/September 5,, 2019.

42 See the ministerial memo from July 4, 2018.

43 Ministerial decree, november 20, 2018, "Schema di capitolato di gara di appalto riguardante la fornitura di beni e servizi per la gestione e il funzionamento dei centri di prima accoglienza": <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/amministrazione-trasparente/bandi-gara-e-contratti/schema-capitolato-gara-appalto-fornitura-beni-e-servizi-relativo-alla-gestione-e-funzionamento-dei-centri-prima-accoglienza>.



(which can only host refugees and unaccompanied foreign minors) and election of the government reception system managed by the Prefectures as the only system to host asylum seekers; extension of the application of the “Urban Daspo” (prohibition to visit a certain city) to areas where there are also fairs, markets and hospitals and worsening of the penalties provided for blocking free movement.

Law No. 132 also amends Law No. 91/1992 on citizenship, doubling from two to four years the maximum waiting time from the submission of the application, increasing the contribution to be paid to the State to start the procedure (from 200 to 250 euros) and providing for the possibility of revoking citizenship following a final conviction for certain crimes, including political ones.

Decree-Law no. 57/2019, which came into force on 15 June 2019, was converted into law on 6 August 2019: it was specifically designed to definitively stop the work of NGOs that provide search and rescue at sea. The law gives the Minister of the Interior the power to restrict or prohibit the entry, transit or stopping of ships in the territorial sea for security reasons or when the crime of "aiding and abetting illegal immigration" is committed; it provides for a sanction for the captain of the ship ranging from a minimum of 150 thousand euros to a maximum of one million euros, the seizure of the ship and an increase in funds allocated to repatriation programs.

The unexpected and sudden government crisis in August 2019 put an early end to the work of the Minister of Propaganda. It was impossible to take stock, even partially, of the Conte 2 government, which took office only on 5 September 2019 and was also forced to deal with the health emergency of Covid-19. The entry into office of a new Minister (Lamorgese), less inclined to media visibility than her predecessor, contributes to freeing the institutional public debate from the most aggressive discriminatory tones. The organization of a National Conference on Hate Crimes, on 21st January 2020, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the birth of OSCAD (Observatory for Security against Acts of Discrimination), certainly represents an important first time in Italian history, both on a sym-



bolic and institutional level. The new Minister also brings back transparency on the data on the people housed in the reception centres.

However, the "Salvini" Laws still remain in force. The launch of a new measure for the emergence of undocumented work included in the "Relaunch" decree is conceived in the context of the health emergency and has great limitations. The Memorandum signed with Libya in 2017 has been extended and nothing points to the launch of a meaningful reform in the field of immigration and asylum.

And as the summer approaches, the announcements of thousands of people waiting to leave Libya⁴⁴ and the disturbing information on the human rights violations on migrants along the Balkan Route are back.

Ten years and more, back to square one?

So, has nothing changed since 2009? Not exactly.

One of the main signs of change seems to us to be the slow but progressive sedimentation of an anti-discriminatory jurisprudence, more consolidated in the civil field, but significant also in the criminal domain. Even in the awareness that the legal space cannot constitute the only axis of an effective institutional strategy to fight racism, it is undoubted that the consolidation of a culture of equal opportunities and of the right to non-discrimination also passes through the civil and criminal sanction of discrimination and racist violence. A decisive step would also be that of shutting down those right-wing organisations that explicitly refer to fascism, theorise and practice xenophobia and racism – both things are illegal in Italy.

In 2009, there was no official source to account for the racist violence perpetrated in our country. Today, with the limitations of an inadequate classification system and the persistent lack of institutional coordination between the main authorities, the data transmitted by OSCAD (Security Observatory against Discriminatory Acts) to ODIHR (Office for

⁴⁴ On June 9, 2020, the announcement by the secret services of 20,000 people ready to leave Libya found great visibility in the media.



Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OECD) make it possible to have a yearly picture of complaints about "hate crimes" and to disaggregate those of a xenophobic and racist nature. For the first time this data was communicated to the media.

The most serious racist violence has received more attention in recent years than in the past from the media, what is still lacking, though, is the willingness to focus on the systemic character of racism, its institutional dimension, and its close connection with the ideas that inform migration and asylum policies.

Reacting to the push from institutions and users, even the main social media companies have intervened several times to limit the spread of racist and xenophobic messages through their channels. The results are mixed, but it seems that the network can no longer be considered a free space for insults, threats and incitements to racist violence.

Unfortunately, the crucial change that is missing is in the political sphere, which to date has been unable to develop a project for an alternative to a model based on the primacy of economic interests, individualism, competition and the widening of inequalities.

Yet even the health emergency of 2020 helps us remember that equality, solidarity and social justice are "necessary utopias"⁴⁵, without which it is difficult to really respond to the most pressing social needs and, also in this way, to eradicate the deep roots of xenophobia and racism.

45 Stefano Rodotà uses this beautiful definition in his book *Solidarity. Utopia necessaria*, Laterza, Bari 2014.