

# Chronicles of Ordinary Racism

Fourth White Paper on Racism in Italy

edited by Lunaria



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## Table of contents

Introduction	3
The political and cultural context	5
From the migranticide policies of the European Union to resentment communities <i>Annamaria Rivera</i>	6
Italy: the shrewd use of the rhetoric of fear conceals norms and policies that violate human rights <i>Grazia Naletto</i>	19
Crimes of solidarity <i>Sergio Bontempelli</i>	32
Some key words in the resumed and degrading rant on immigrants and asylum seekers <i>Giuseppe Faso</i>	42
Out of control. When social media cross the “wall” of racism <i>Paola Andrisani</i>	57
Society gets organised: solidarity from below <i>Serena Chiodo</i>	67
Migrants and media	79
<i>Piazza Pulita</i> : the quest for high ratings legitimizes racism <i>Grazia Naletto</i>	80
<i>Antiziganism</i> on the front page <i>Paola Andrisani</i>	86
The martyrdom of Mohamed Habassi <i>Annamaria Rivera</i>	90
45 seconds in Scoglitti <i>Paola Andrisani</i>	94

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Inciting hatred <i>Serena Chiodo</i>	98
The “veil” and neutral discrimination <i>Paola Andrisani</i>	102
“Throw around some numbers: nobody checks” <i>Giuseppe Faso</i>	107
NGOs: darkness at the end of the tunnel <i>Grazia Naleto</i>	110
Chronicles of ordinary racism	123
The overflowing racism of 4.0 era <i>Grazia Naleto</i>	124
The murder of Muhammad Shahzad Khan in Torpignattara <i>Serena Chiodo</i>	146
A life for a rotten melon. The absurd murder of Sare Mamadou in Lucera <i>Paola Andrisani</i>	153
Palermo: the courage of Yusupha Susso <i>Serena Chiodo</i>	158
Murder in Fermo <i>Serena Chiodo</i>	163
The Palata case <i>Annamaria Rivera</i>	169
Gorino’s barricades <i>Grazia Naleto</i>	172
Follonica: the cage of contempt <i>Anna Dotti</i>	178
The Authors	182

## Introduction

In 2017 Lunaria celebrated its 25th birthday. Twenty-five years of communal work and social activism, of voluntary work without borders, of disseminating information as well as engaging in training and critical research. Twenty-five years of daily activism, cultural initiatives, campaigns for peace, solidarity and the right to citizenship, working against all forms of discrimination and racism.

It is in this context that the first edition of the *White Paper on racism* was published in 2009 and, in addition, the website *Cronache di ordinario razzismo* in 2011. Steps of a systematic work of information, analysis and monitoring but also, and foremost, of grass-root activism against racism.

Since 1992, when Lunaria was born, many things have changed. The social and cultural contexts and the collective imaginary that we deal with on a daily basis are different.

The outcomes of these changes are apparent. To prevent and fight racism in a social and economic system based on growth and the legitimization all forms of inequality is far from easy.

In today’s liquid modernity – and in a society in which expressions of dissatisfaction, discomfort and social exclusion generates solitude, pitching people against each other rather than against those that have the power to decide over our lives – the aggressive acts against the Romani, migrants and refugees are spreading as a virus throughout our territories and in the virtual reality of the web.

Today more than ever we need to open our minds and activate our intelligent and creative forces in order to put into practise Article 3 of our Constitution which at the moment seems only to exist on paper: “All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions”.

We need to focus our attention on the abusive, denigrating and degrading words and discourses of instrumental public figures brimmed with xenophobia, opportunism and populism today so easily transmitted on the web and on social networks.

“Le parole non sono acqua”, words make up culture and history teaches us that in order gain the consensus of the general public it is not necessary to agitate the fear of the invasion of the other or of the clash between civilizations or religions.

It is possible to be *populist* while arguing for the principles and ideas of equality, peace and solidarity among peoples, for social and economic justice, and the guarantee of fundamental social rights.

And it is possible to fight to claim them. Fair ideas can get public consent and influence everyday actions and behaviour. It would be enough keep them present, not only in the collective imaginary, but in our daily public, social and political activities.

In this moment of confusion and cultural disorientation, of political and moral deregulation, the collective priority of individuals, associations, movements and political forces should be that of putting together a sufficiently solid perspective for claiming and defending our rights.

The wind, however, seems to be blowing in another direction. Although in Austria and France, for the time being, the most dangerous faces of xenophobia and racism seem to have been politically defeated, European and national public debates have been deeply influenced by them. One could argue that such discourses do not need electoral legitimisation since they are already hegemonic in the social and cultural domains.

These changes are expressed in The European Agenda on Migration, the EU-Turkey agreement of 2015, the European cooperation agreements with objectionable heads of state, in the attacks on NGOs and on the initiatives of solidarity of civil society, the latest “reforms” of national legislation on immigration and urban security and in the rancorous populist outbursts of some prominent public figures.

But it is above all the deaths of the numerous migrants in the Mediterranean and the everyday racist violence that obliges us to not avert our eyes. That compels us to look away from the impressionistic emotional narrative of current news, that asks us to look for non-simplistic interpretations of events; that urges us to look for new, creative, but at the same time concrete and forward-looking, initiatives of solidarity; we will not accept the arguments of “governance of migration flows” for “guaranteeing our security”; initiatives that deny thousands of people the right to exist, removing them from our sight.

As our friends from [comune-info.net](http://comune-info.net) have aptly put it “walls are built to hide and protect those in high places from the ones below them”.

Always looking out for the ones below, born here or elsewhere, the pages that follow are intended to support the fight for equality and to stimulate an increasingly strong, stubborn and obstinate struggle against all forms of inequality and racism.

## The political and cultural context

## From the migranticide policies of the European Union to resentment communities

Annamaria Rivera

### Hecatombs in the Mediterranean: the shadow of the twentieth century

The so-called “refugee crisis”, lays bare the re-emergence of Europe’s evil past. A past that the European Union, according to its constituent fathers, have unravelled and transcended along with the temptation to get rid of anyone who is considered an agent of disorder or even an “internal enemy”<sup>1</sup>.

The *shadow* of the twentieth century, to put it in Jungian terms, is evident primarily considering the absurd dimensions of the hecatomb of migrants and refugees heading for Europe. The dimensions of the massacre in the Mediterranean and of the obvious responsibilities of the European Union are so huge that it could be called a genocide if this means to signify “*a form of unilateral large-scale massacre that targets members of a specific group or human category*”<sup>2</sup>; or, at least, regard it as a crime against humanity.

Indeed, some European countries seem to apply genocidal methods without any scruples or historical memory. A case in point is Hungary that, at least twice (July and September 2015), has come to use armoured carriages to carry refugees beyond their borders: an act that evokes the deportation of the same Hungarian Jews in 1944.

This country’s nationalist and racist government considers refugees a threat to Europe’s safety and to its Christian values and has thus closed its borders. Applying a law made *ad hoc* Hungary detains asylum seekers, including children,<sup>3</sup> sub-

jecting them to brutalities worthy of a Nazi regime before having them expelled.<sup>4</sup>

To illustrate the extent of the massacre in the Mediterranean, it is enough to mention the most recent data (at the time of writing), considering that these are conservative estimates, as underlined by the *Missing Migrant Project* managed by the IOM (International Organization for Migration).

From January 1 to June 22, 2017, the deceased found on the three Mediterranean routes were at least 2,108, excluding those occurring along land routes. An impressive figure considering that this corresponds to over 74% of the total of deaths in that period. *On a planetary scale* the victims of migrations and exoduses were 2,848. This figure should be augmented with those relating to deceases caused by hunger, thirst, dehydration, as well as robbery, assault, kidnapping, rape and torture, which have been inflicted on migrants and refugees in countries such as Libya where “hunting the black” is a common practice. Here, extreme forms of violence take place at check-points by men in uniform, as well as in the detention centres – actual camps some managed by the militias,<sup>5</sup> where migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are confined: all considered and treated as criminals.<sup>6</sup>

Not to mention the also lethal brutalities carried out by gangs haunting in the desert between Niger, Mali, Sudan and Libya itself. Countries with which the European Union and Italy subscribe to bilateral agreements aimed at the externalization of their borders.

### Bilateral agreements with less than “safe” countries

Among the many treaties signed by Italy with Libya over time, the most recent is the *Memorandum of Understanding* signed on February 2, 2017, by the Gentiloni government with the fragile, almost spectral, government of Fayed al-Sarraj. This

1 A. Rivera, *La “crisi dei rifugiati” è crisi dell’Unione europea*, in “Teoria politica” (nuova serie), 6, 2016, pp. 273-286.

2 I use this formula taking into account the contribution of some scholars who have, over time, proposed definitions aimed at updating the old notion of genocide adopted at the time by the UN (“any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”). Referring in particular to the works of Pieter N. Drost (*The Crime of State*; vol. 1: *Humanicide*, vol. 2: *Genocide*; A. W. Sythoff, Leyden 1959) and Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn (*The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, Yale University Press, 1990).

3 The law passed by Parliament on 7 March 2017 and entered into force twenty days later states that all asylum seekers, including children, are to be detained in “transit zones” along the borders with Serbia and Croatia, until the conclusion of the international protection procedure. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Amnesty International and other major NGOs have judged it very severely. See, to this effect, C. Nardinocchi, “Hungary, the

accusation of NGOs: “The Law Against Refugees Violates International Law”, *the Republic* of 8 March 2017: [www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2017/03/08/news/ungheria\\_1\\_accusa\\_delle\\_ong\\_la\\_legge\\_contro\\_i\\_rifugiati\\_viola\\_il\\_diritto\\_internazionale\\_-160082968/](http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2017/03/08/news/ungheria_1_accusa_delle_ong_la_legge_contro_i_rifugiati_viola_il_diritto_internazionale_-160082968/)

4 According to a report published on 6 April 2017, the Hungarian authorities, as well as the Croats, would regularly mishandle the refugees brutally, kicking them with their boots, inciting dogs against them, force them to strip at polar temperatures, and submit them to frozen showers. Oxfam, Bchr (Belgrade Centre for Human Rights) e Myla (Macedonian Young Lawyers Association), *A Dangerous ‘Game’: The pushback of migrants, including refugees, at Europe’s borders*: [www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Report-Un-gioco-pericoloso-Il-respingimento-di-migranti-e-rifugiati-alle-frontiere-europee\\_6-aprile-2017.pdf](http://www.oxfamitalia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Report-Un-gioco-pericoloso-Il-respingimento-di-migranti-e-rifugiati-alle-frontiere-europee_6-aprile-2017.pdf)

5 Unicef, *Deadly Journey for Children. The Central Mediterranean Migration Route*, February 2017: [www.unicef.de/blob/135970/6178f12582223da6980ee1974a772c14/a-deadl-journey-for-children---unicef-report-data.pdfA](http://www.unicef.de/blob/135970/6178f12582223da6980ee1974a772c14/a-deadl-journey-for-children---unicef-report-data.pdfA)

6 F. Iezzi, “Voci dal limbo: Perché siamo qui”, *il manifesto*, 21 June 2017: [ilmanifesto.it/voci-dal-limbo-perche-siamo-qui/](http://ilmanifesto.it/voci-dal-limbo-perche-siamo-qui/)

is in violation of Article 80 of the Italian Constitution which requires that such international treaties should be ratified by both branches of Parliament.

On March 31, in Rome, thanks to the strong commitment of the Minister of the Interior, Marco Minniti, and the mediation of the Tuareg, a peace agreement was reached between the “tribes” of Fezzan<sup>7</sup> and this certainly not due to a disinterested pacifist<sup>8</sup> spirit.

As Minniti has stated, the work of “pacification” is also aimed at ensuring control of the south of Libya, along the five thousand kilometres of Sahara, bordering west of Algeria, south of Niger and Chad.<sup>9</sup> This immense and very insecure area, should – it is claimed – be secured by a special border guard, trained and equipped by Italy.

That same day, the Head of Government, together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Angelino Alfano and the Interior Minister, signed yet another agreement with Mahamadou Issoufou, President of Niger, a country crucial to the Trans-Saharan migration route. In exchange for the lock down of the Nigerian borders, Italy pledged to pay a considerable sum.<sup>10</sup> This agreement appears to have, as an ulterior motive, the attempt to compete with the neo-colonial interests of France.

In short, the current strategy of the EU – criminal as well as unrealistic – has the ambition to seal off every escape route, including the Balkan one. To this end a statement was signed with Turkey on March 18, 2016, by which the European Union granted six billion euros and some political concessions in exchange for the Turkish commitment to “re-welcome” the refugees and “irregular” migrants that arrived on the Greek islands from March 20 of that year onwards.

And yet, this “safe third country”, led by an increasingly despotic Erdoğan, is the first on the list of countries that violate the European Convention on Human Rights as denounced by The European Court in a report released at the end of 2015. In addition, the Turkish state – which also hosts more than three million refugees – largely Syrian – has never ratified the New York Protocol (1967) on refugee status.

7 The Awlad Suleiman and the Tebu (also known as Tibu o Tubu).

8 G. Longo, “Libia, le tribù del Sud siglano la pace e si impegnano a bloccare i migranti”, *La Stampa*, April 2, 2017: [www.lastampa.it/2017/04/02/esteri/libia-le-trib-del-sud-siglano-la-pace-e-si-impegnano-a-bloccare-i-migranti-qzNs23DGe0OSdji7G285FK/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2017/04/02/esteri/libia-le-trib-del-sud-siglano-la-pace-e-si-impegnano-a-bloccare-i-migranti-qzNs23DGe0OSdji7G285FK/pagina.html)

9 “Sealing the frontier south of Libya means sealing the border to the south of Europe”, Minniti boasted.

10 C. Bertini, “Dall’Italia 50 milioni al Niger per rinforzare le sue frontiere in chiave anti migranti”, *La Stampa*, April 1, 2017: [www.lastampa.it/2017/04/01/esteri/dallitalia-milioni-al-niger-per-rinforzare-le-sue-frontiere-in-chiave-anti-migranti-2Vid9tjDS08TDLWN0Ue-BAP/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2017/04/01/esteri/dallitalia-milioni-al-niger-per-rinforzare-le-sue-frontiere-in-chiave-anti-migranti-2Vid9tjDS08TDLWN0Ue-BAP/pagina.html)

Sometimes bilateral agreements are even kept secret, as in the following case. In a letter of October 26, 2016, signed by 23 European parliamentarians, addressed to the already mentioned Alfano, then Minister of the Interior, and Gentiloni, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and to the Head of the State Police Franco Gabrielli (and, for knowledge, to UNHCR and IOM), MEPs Barbara Spinelli and Marie-Christine Vergiat condemned the forced repatriation of 40 Sudanese citizens on August 24, 2016, escaping the persecution of President Omar al-Bashir’s cruel dictatorship; who is subject to a warrant for arrest by the International Criminal Tribunal for War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity:

This collective expulsion – Spinelli and Vergiat writes – has brought to light the existence of a *Memorandum* with Sudan [...], revealed the existence of a Memorandum of Understanding with Sudan, signed on August 3, 2016, in Rome by the Head of the Italian State Police, Mr Franco Gabrielli, and by his Sudanese counterpart, General Hashim Osman Al Hussein, in the presence of Interior Ministry officials and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. This agreement, which was kept secret for long time and has never been discussed or ratified by the Italian Parliament, provides for collaboration between the two Countries in the fight against crime and, in particular, the management of migratory effects and borders.

The two MEPs state, among other things:

[...] among the beneficiaries of the European Funds for the management of migratory flows, there will be the Janjaweed militia or Rapid Support Forces (RSF), who well-known for the ethnic cleansing perpetrated in Darfur. There is the risk and the fear that this kind of agreements, coupled with the support given to this militia, essentially aim to impede Eritrean, Ethiopian and Sudanese asylum-seekers from reaching Libya and then crossing the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>11</sup>

### The criminalization of solidarity

In short, what makes these journeys increasingly risky, and often fatal, are primarily the prohibitionist policies in Europe; agreements with third countries that

11 See: “Una lettera di Barbara Spinelli e Marie-Christine Vergiat chiede chiarimenti alle autorità italiane sul Memorandum di intesa con il Sudan”, October 26, 2016: [barbara-spinelli.it/2016/10/26/una-lettera-di-barbara-spinelli-e-marie-christine-vergiat-chiede-chiarimenti-alle-autorita-italiane-sul-memorandum-di-intesa-con-il-sudan/](http://barbara-spinelli.it/2016/10/26/una-lettera-di-barbara-spinelli-e-marie-christine-vergiat-chiede-chiarimenti-alle-autorita-italiane-sul-memorandum-di-intesa-con-il-sudan/). G. Zandonini, “Sudan, l’accordo segreto con il governo italiano per il rimpatrio dei migranti”, *la Repubblica*, October 26, 2016: [www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/cibo-e-ambiente/2016/10/26/news/sudan-150610745/](http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/cibo-e-ambiente/2016/10/26/news/sudan-150610745/)



are less than “safe”; the refusal to implement humanitarian corridors along with protected and legal migration routes as well as failed, or badly executed, sea rescue operations by military missions such as *Triton*, which replaced *Mare Nostrum*, a vast Italian rescue mission found too expensive by the EU. In this regard, a study by Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani, published on April 18, 2016, showed that the replacement of rescue operations with border controls and safeguard operations (such as *Triton*) is to be counted among the causes of the heinous increase in mortality in the Mediterranean.<sup>12</sup>

Failed rescue at sea is sometimes *deliberate*, as happened on October 11, 2013, when Italian and Maltese military commanders, wrangling over the responsibility of the rescue operation, eventually left 268 Syrians, including sixty children, to drown.<sup>13</sup>

Even more cynical, hence, is the defamatory campaign against the NGOs engaged in search and rescue operations in the sea section between Italy and Libya. A campaign paradoxically initiated by *Frontex*, armed wing of the EU and its prohibitionist – thus *migranticidal* – policies: in a “confidential” report, disclosed by the *Financial Times* on December 15, 2016, *Frontex* accused the NGOs of acting in understanding with the traffickers thus helping to increase departures and, consequently, the massacres in the Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, the Procurator of Catania – where *Frontex* Italian headquarters are located – initiated an “inquiry” on their activities, publicly insinuating that there was something shady behind the “proliferating” of small NGOs and their “big financial availabilities”.<sup>15</sup>

Various political parties participated in this denigrating slander including, not

surprisingly, the *Movimento 5 Stelle* (5 Star Movement) with an editorial on their blog *Il blog delle Stelle* so disinforming and defamatory which received a massive amount of openly racist commentaries. This campaign was relaunched by Luigi Di Maio, vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies, who labelled the vessels of the NGOs involved in the search and rescue work “taxis of the Mediterranean”.<sup>16</sup>

One of the purposes of this offensive is probably to distract public opinion from the European Union’s current strategy. A strategy, as argued above, whose main goal seems to be the outsourcing of border controls through bilateral agreements, even with the fiercest dictatorships. Giorgio Menchini, President of the Cospe, has argued that NGOs are under attack as they are “uncomfortable witnesses of border outsourcing policies, of the repression methods of the Libyan coast guard and of the systematic violation of fundamental human rights along the transit routes of refugees and of migrants”.<sup>17</sup>

At the time of writing, the Italian government is considering the possibility of denying landing in national ports to NGO ships, engaged in relief operations, that are flying foreign flags.<sup>18</sup>

Faced with the massive inflow of refugees on Italian coasts, our authorities seem capable only of banning such praiseworthy humanitarian initiatives: a measure radically opposed to both United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and International Law.

They would be well advised, instead, to at least strive for a radical reform of the Dublin III Regulation (application of the Dublin Convention), which forces refugees to apply for international protection in the first country of arrival, preventing them from moving within European territory to reach their family members.<sup>19</sup>

The campaign against NGOs is not the only example of the *criminalization*

12 C. Heller e L. Pezzani (in collaboration with *WatchTheMed*), *Death by RescUe, The Lethal Effects Of The EU's Policies Of Non-assistance At Sea*, April 18, 2016: [deathbyrescue.org/](http://deathbyrescue.org/)

13 F. Gatti, “‘Stiamo morendo, per favore’: le telefonate del naufragio dei bambini”, *L'Espresso*, May 9, 2017: [espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/05/09/news/cosi-annega-un-profugo-tutte-le-telefonate-del-naufragio-dei-bambini-1.301045](http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/05/09/news/cosi-annega-un-profugo-tutte-le-telefonate-del-naufragio-dei-bambini-1.301045)

14 D. Robinson, “EU border force flags concerns over charities’ interaction with migrant smugglers”, *Financial Times*, December 15, 2016: [www.ft.com/content/3e6b6450-c1f7-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354](http://www.ft.com/content/3e6b6450-c1f7-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354). See also L. Bagnoli “Migranti, si infiamma lo scontro tra Frontex e Ong”, *Lettera 43*, December 17, 2016: [www.lettera43.it/it/articoli/mondo/2016/12/17/migranti-si-infiamma-lo-scontro-tra-frontex-e-ong/207245/](http://www.lettera43.it/it/articoli/mondo/2016/12/17/migranti-si-infiamma-lo-scontro-tra-frontex-e-ong/207245/)

15 F. Viviano e A. Ziniti, “Contatti con scafisti, indagini sulle Ong”, *repubblica.it*, February 17, 2017: [ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/02/17/contatti-con-scafisti-indagine-sulle-Ong15.html](http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/02/17/contatti-con-scafisti-indagine-sulle-Ong15.html). Daniela Padoan has written an extensive account of this dispute, *Perché danno fastidio le Ong che salvano i migranti in mare?*, March 9, 2017, that can be accessed at: [www.a-dif.org/2017/03/09/perche-danno-fastidio-le-ong-che-salvano-i-migranti-in-mare/](http://www.a-dif.org/2017/03/09/perche-danno-fastidio-le-ong-che-salvano-i-migranti-in-mare/)

16 M5S, “Più di 8mila sbarchi in 3 giorni: l’oscuro ruolo delle Ong private”, *Il blog delle stelle*, April 21, 2017: [www.ilblogdellestelle.it/piu\\_di\\_8mila\\_sbarchi\\_in\\_3\\_giorni\\_loscuro\\_ruolo\\_delle\\_ong\\_private.html](http://www.ilblogdellestelle.it/piu_di_8mila_sbarchi_in_3_giorni_loscuro_ruolo_delle_ong_private.html). For Di Maio’s statements, see: [www.facebook.com/LuigiDiMaio/posts/1328205963882613](https://www.facebook.com/LuigiDiMaio/posts/1328205963882613)

17 See “Migranti, lavoro eccezionale delle Ong: senza ci sarebbe ecatombe”, *Redattore Sociale*, April 26, 2017: [www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/533321/Migranti-lavoro-eccezionale-delle-Ong-senza-ci-sarebbe-ecatombe](http://www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/533321/Migranti-lavoro-eccezionale-delle-Ong-senza-ci-sarebbe-ecatombe)

18 U. Rosso e G. Gagliardi, “Migranti, l’Italia alla Ue: ipotesi blocco alle navi straniere. Mattarella: ‘Situazione ingestibile’”, *repubblica.it*, June 28, 2017: [www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/06/28/news/migranti\\_italia\\_ue\\_sbarchi-169383917/?ref=RHPPLF-BH-IO-C8-P1-S1.8-T1](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/06/28/news/migranti_italia_ue_sbarchi-169383917/?ref=RHPPLF-BH-IO-C8-P1-S1.8-T1)

19 In fact, it establishes that the State of the port country has jurisdiction to examine applications for asylum or recognition of refugee status, and even provides that asylum seekers may be detained if there is a ‘danger of escape’.

of solidarity.<sup>20</sup> Measures affecting those who seek to fill serious gaps in national and community institutions are multiplying. A case in point is the ordinance issued – actually, renewed – in August 2016 by the Mayor of Ventimiglia (Partito Democratico), prohibiting the distribution of food to the many refugees who, under more than precarious conditions, waited to cross the border towards France. Based on that ordinance, on March 20, 2017, three French volunteers from the Roya Citoyenne association were arrested and charged while distributing food to some of the refugees.<sup>21</sup>

It is important to stress how such initiatives, carried out by institutions, with the consent of certain political parties and certain media, contribute to nourish and legitimize common xenophobic, if not racist, sentiments among the general public. Reinforcing the well-known vicious circle that binds institutional racism to “popular” media.

### **A disconcerting recommendation from the European Commission and its willing executioners**

The measures taken by the European Union and its States while facing the “refugee crisis” are cynical, disrespectful of the most basic human rights, indifferent to the fate of refugees as well as inconsistent, contradictory and often counterproductive.

Just as senseless is the haste with which many European countries have barricaded themselves behind national borders, by erecting walls and barbed wire fences, by deploying armies to restrict the freedom of movement and even, between 2015 and 2016, by unilaterally suspending the Schengen Convention thereby closing internal borders.

And this with the approval of the European Commission which by granting one extension after another, still – at the time of writing – authorizes Austria, Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden to bypass, albeit “temporarily,” the principle of free movement in Europe.

This act is not the only one to cast a shadow on the European Commission. There is also the *Recommendation* published on March 2, 2017, with which the Commission not only urged for “Overcoming the challenges of readmission by working to swiftly conclude the negotiations of Readmission Agreements with

Nigeria, Tunisia and Jordan and striving to engage with Morocco and Algeria” but also called for the forced return of one million migrants and irregular refugees present on European territory within the year, urging Member States to carry out mass expulsions as well as their confinement up to eighteen months, children included, in special detention centers.<sup>22</sup>

Italy seems even to have anticipated the implementation of these suggestions with the so-called Minniti-Orlando plan (“Disposizioni urgenti per l’accelerazione dei procedimenti in materia di protezione internazionale, nonché per il contrasto dell’immigrazione illegal” – Urgent Provisions for Accelerating International Protection Proceedings and the Contraption of Illegal Immigration), that was made public in mid-January 2017 and became law on April 12. The main provisions of this law – which, according to many jurists, violate both the Italian Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights – are aimed at speeding up the procedures for examining applications for international protection, enhancing the effectiveness of raids and forced repatriations and increasing the rate of expulsion of “the irregulars” and the so-called *rejected*.

Particularly serious is the abolition of the second instance for asylum seekers who have appealed against a refusal and the drastic limitation of the possibility of contradictory proceedings in the hearings at the Territorial Commission. Not to mention the increase, from 4 to 20, of administrative detention centers for “irregulars”; institutions that are illicit according to the Constitution and the rule of law.

This law has the same disciplinary and repressive ideology as that of April 18, 2017, no. 48 (“Urgent City Security Provisions”), which pursues the objective of monitoring, criminalizing and punishing marginality, poverty and non-compliant behaviors by targeting disadvantaged and “deviant” groups such as homeless, vagrants, street vendors and squatters, but also drug users, graffiti writers and political “extremists”. It is predictable that mainly Romani and immigrants will be affected.

### **From the top down: EU policies and the “resentment communities”**

In fact, paradoxically, it is the European Union’s *armed supranationalism* (as stated repeatedly) to legitimize and favour the sovereign and nationalist drives of individual states. In this regard, one example is worth mentioning.

In September 2015, exceptionally derogating from the above-mentioned Dublin III Regulation, two decisions of the European Council arranged for the

20 L. Pepino, “Ventimiglia e non solo, la criminalizzazione della solidarietà”, *il manifesto*, March 29, 2017: [ilmanifesto.it/ventimiglia-e-non-solo-la-criminalizzazione-della-solidarieta/](http://ilmanifesto.it/ventimiglia-e-non-solo-la-criminalizzazione-della-solidarieta/)

21 V. Dal., “Ventimiglia. Tre volontari denunciati: ‘Hanno somministrato cibo ai migranti’”, *Avvenire*, March 24, 2017: [www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/tre-volontari-denunciati-hanno-somministrato-cibo-ai-migranti](http://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/tre-volontari-denunciati-hanno-somministrato-cibo-ai-migranti)

22 European Commission, *Press release database*, March 2, 2017: [europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-350\\_it.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-350_it.htm)



“relocation” within two years, of 160,000 asylum seekers present in Italy and Greece, to other Member States.

Despite the small quota, the defense of the national interest prevailed once again: in fact, until the middle of June 2017, only twenty thousand asylum-seekers had been “relocated”. As it were not enough, countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland persisted in their refusal, pushing the European Commission to open an infringement procedure against them.<sup>23</sup>

In turn, supremacist and nationalist drives contribute to the success of the right and extreme right, in much of Europe, thus increasing xenophobia and racism. The case of France is exemplary. As Willy Pelletier writes, the media’s euphoria following Macron’s election to the Presidency of the Republic overlooked that “almost one in four (22.4%) voted for Marine Le Pen in the second round”.<sup>24</sup> As for Italy, the victory of the rightist ranks in the second round of the municipal elections of June 25, 2017, is no less disturbing. Especially considering that ideological and political hegemony will most likely be exerted by the most controversial and racist wing, guided by the Matteo Salvini of the Northern League.

The institutional discrimination, the media alarmism, the constant amalgamation between migrants or refugees and terrorists, and the poor management of reception, at least in some Member States, only encourage the recurring xenophobia. Which sometimes takes paranoid traits thus fueling racist “spontaneous” violence against the *undesirables*, often used as scapegoats, especially at this stage.

Undoubtedly, to this contributes socio-economic factors such as austerity policies, the crisis of the social state, the gap separating the super-agitated classes from the multitude of poor, unemployed, impoverished, downgraded, and low-income workers.

Not to mention the weight of the crisis of democracy and representation, which increases, among other things, that sense of frustration, disorientation and resentment that is easily directed towards scapegoats, i.e. towards social categories among the weakest and most vulnerable, such as migrants, refugees and Romani.

Thus, it is well-founded to argue that “popular” racism is not a “war between the poor” – a formula that has become commonplace, nevertheless still shared by

23 To this should be added at least the case of Austria. This state has only recently dissolved its reservations. It has committed to accepting, however, only fifty refugees from Italy. See “Ue procede contro Paesi inadempienti sulla ricollocazione dei rifugiati”, *Smanieri in Italia*, June 14, 2017: [www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita/attualita/attualita-sp-754/ue-procede-contro-paesi-inadempienti-sulla-ricollocazione-dei-rifugiati.html](http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita/attualita/attualita-sp-754/ue-procede-contro-paesi-inadempienti-sulla-ricollocazione-dei-rifugiati.html)

24 “Il voto al Fn, una battaglia di prossimità”, *Le Monde Diplomatique-il manifesto*, 24(6), June 2017, p. 11.

left-wing pundits and not – but rather a *socialized rancor*<sup>25</sup> consecutively resulting in a sense of frustration, impotence and insecurity, as well as in the loss of ties of close proximity.

Resentment and rancor are directed towards those – not foreseen, unwanted, *deliberately* unknown, thus reduced to ghosts – who are considered to be abusive occupants of “our territory” and “our nation”. “Padroni a casa nostra (Masters in our own home)” – the typical slogan of the Northern League, sums up and legitimizes this sentiment – and exemplifies a hegemony that reaches far beyond the Northern Leagues influence area and the Italian context.

This pattern, however, is not always spontaneous nor does it concern only communities that are particularly affected by the economic crisis and austerity policies or solely marginal and “degraded” neighborhoods. To turn to the Italian case, it is enough to mention, for example, what transpired in mid-July 2015 at Casale San Nicola, a “respectable” district par excellence, in the northern area of Rome.

Here the arrival of nineteen, of seventy-seven predicted, asylum seekers was enough to trigger a violent uprising of a large number of residents, instigated and headed by Casa Pound and other extreme right-wing groups culminating in roadblocks, clashes with the police, insults and the hurling of objects against the coach carrying the refugees. It ended with the state’s surrender; the Prefecture ordered to abandon the host structure (a former school) on March 12, 2016. Later, in January 2017, the same building was again put forward as a reception center by the same NGO, Isola Verde, which had managed it for eight months but was excluded from the call for tender as “not complying with the existing urban planning legislation.

This is not an Italian peculiarity. Among the European countries there are many cases where residents of small communes or metropolitan districts have rebelled against the arrival of a few dozen asylum seekers. Along the same line – in France and elsewhere – some municipal administrations prefer to pay the heavy fines provided for by law in the case of refusal, rather than accepting a certain number of refugees, albeit limited.

Not to mention the attacks with molotovs or grenades against centers for asylum seekers and refugees that has occurred in a number of European countries, from Italy to Germany. Here in the year 2016, 3,533 attacks were recorded result-

25 Resuming the concept coined – in a very different context – by the German sociologist Hans Magnus Enzensberger in *Il perdente radicale* (Einaudi, Torino 2007).

ing in the injury of 560 people, including 43 children.<sup>26</sup> In the German case, such acts of violence are no longer carried out exclusively by militants of the extreme right, but also by ordinary citizens without any political affiliation.

### Islamophobia and antiziganism: the role of the institutions

One of the most widespread expressions of aversion, rejection and de-humanization of the *Other* is certainly Islamophobia, more correctly anti-Muslim racism. A structural trend in European societies, which rekindled after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Today it re-emerges to manifest itself in explicit, even violent forms, after every Jihadist terrorist attack. Starting from the Paris bombings of November 13, 2015, it has extended extensively, also in the form of hunting down foreigners and *strangers*, by targeting anyone *perceived* or *imagined* as exotic, and therefore suspect.

Frequently Islamophobia takes on institutional forms, as in August 2016 with the issue of the Burkini in France and Corsica. A series of municipal ordinances aimed at prohibiting the use on the beaches of this garment, moreover a typical product of the fashion industry.

In fact, the prohibition applies only to presumed Muslim women who are “excessively” covered, as the ordinances states. The latter, issued by some thirty municipalities in the Maritime Alps and the Var, soon set precedent to the extent of being implemented by several Corsican Communes, even Cagnano, a village of just 177 souls. Thus becoming the pretext for outrageous police interventions towards women who were “too covered” and, in Corsica, resulting in the attacks by groups of locals escalating in riots as well as in the “hunt for the Arab” on August 14, 2016, in Lupino, a popular neighborhood in Bastia, staged by a crowd of about four hundred angry Corsicans.<sup>27</sup>

This case exemplifies the vicious circle mentioned before as well as the naivety of institutions that, by encouraging “ordinary people” vicious sentiments, only play with fire. The attempted massacre of Muslims in London in the night between June 18 and June 19, 2017, is not only a tragic change of pace, but it could also be the first stage of a vicious counte-mimetic tendency. In fact, the common British citizen of Welsh origins who, at Seven Sisters Road, in front of the Mus-

lim Welfare House, hurled himself with a van against a crowd of Muslim people gathered for supper and Ramadan night prayers, did nothing more than to imitate, even in technical terms, the style of jihadist brand terrorism.

Nonetheless, in most of the continent, Romani, Sinti and Caminanti, occupy the top spot as victims of rejection, contempt and hostility. This is confirmed by surveys carried out annually by the Pew Research Centre, which, in a research on the prospects of a united and solidarity Europe, spot-checks attitudes towards Roma, Muslim and Jews in various European countries.<sup>28</sup>

The survey published on July 11, 2016, concerning Italy, Greece, Hungary, France, Spain, Poland, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany and Holland shows that antigypsyism is the most structural and widespread form of racism, or at least xenophobia. Italy stands out in this field with an impressive figure: 82% of the interviewed respondents express disdain or fear for the presence of just 180 thousand of Romani and Caminanti (70,000 of whom are Italian citizens), corresponding to just 0.23% of the total population. Our country is followed by Greece, Hungary and France with 67, 64 and 61% respectively of the respective samples.

The Belpaese also exhibits hostility towards Muslims. However, in this field, with 69%, it is “only” second place after Hungary, which “earns” the top position with 72%. With regards to Antisemitism the Italian sample recorded a significant 24%, *ex-aequo* with Poland, both countries overtaken by Greece (55%) and Hungary (32%).

Particularly in Italy, but also in other European countries, antiziganism clearly demonstrates the role of the institutions in empowering and/or legitimizing feelings and “popular” acts of hostility towards this minority, never legally recognized as such. And this is not a prerogative of the right nor is it a recent phenomenon. Without going too far back in time, the Law-Decree of November 1, 2007, called “anti-rom” (“Restrictions on the right of entry and residence for reasons of public order or public security”) for which the second Prodi Government demanded a vote of confidence, is a case in point. Less than a month earlier, Beppe Grillo in his blog, had called the Romanian Roma “a time bomb” and claimed “a moratorium” of the entry into Italy from Romania. It should be remembered that the same year there was an impressive amount of attacks, even incendiary, against Roma settlements.

26 “More than 3,500 attacks on refugees in Germany in 2016: report”, *DW*, February 26, 2017: [www.dw.com/en/more-than-3500-attacks-on-refugees-in-germany-in-2016-report/a-37719365](http://www.dw.com/en/more-than-3500-attacks-on-refugees-in-germany-in-2016-report/a-37719365)

27 A. Rivera, *Il corpo delle altre, tra affaire del velo e farsa del burkini*, “Dialoghi Mediterranei”, n. 22, November 2016: [www.istitutoeuroarabo.it/DM/il-corpo-delle-altre-tra-affaire-del-velo-e-farsa-del-burkini/](http://www.istitutoeuroarabo.it/DM/il-corpo-delle-altre-tra-affaire-del-velo-e-farsa-del-burkini/)

28 R. Wike, B. Stokes e K. Simmons, *Negative views of minorities, refugees common in EU*, Pew Research Center, July 11, 2016: [www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/negative-views-of-minorities-refugees-common-in-eu/](http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/negative-views-of-minorities-refugees-common-in-eu/)

Ultimately, as repeatedly stated, there is a stringent dialectic between European and national policies on the one hand, and on the other, xenophobia and racism falsely reputed as "spontaneous". To disregard such dialectics would be the task and interest of anyone who has at the heart the project (or perhaps "solely" utopia) of a democratic, fair, peaceful and egalitarian Europe founded on a European citizenship regardless of origins.

## Italy: the shrewd use of the rhetoric of fear conceals norms and policies that violate human rights

Grazia Nalletto

### From democratic racism to shameless racism

Memory tends to be selective, but if it serves us right, one of the first times an important representative of the institutions voiced an idea similar to that "let's help the migrants in their homeland" recently pronounced by the Secretary of the Democratic Party, dates back to 1991. It was the Minister for Italians Abroad and Tourism, Margherita Boniver, socialist and party colleague of the one who was behind the first "Immigration Law", Law no. 39 of February 28, 1990, better known as the Martelli Law. The Northern League was recently formed, and at the time, the Minister and her colleagues used less harsh tones: not the rude "helping them back in their homeland", but the more ambiguous "we invest in international development" (implicit: to prevent them from leaving).

Since then 26 years have passed, the Northern League has not yet been able to become a national party, but has participated in 3 Governments, it has administered and administers many municipalities and regions and have had at its disposal time, space, resources and tools to significantly contaminate the political culture of the earlier formations, even those that continue to define themselves as left-wing. The Northern League's *discourses* on migration has *hegemonized* public debate and has proven to be able to influence the administrative and regulatory practices of institutions, even when they are governed by parties that, at least formally, place themselves on the opposing side.

In the third *White Paper* (2014), we warned against considering the Northern League – temporarily in crisis following inquiries involving some of its prominent figures<sup>1</sup> – harmless. Three years later, the League, and in particular its leader, has effortlessly intensified their propaganda against migrants, asylum seekers and Romani, using all information and communication tools available.

The result of such *political agility*, of which both the other parties and the *mainstream* media are largely responsible, is today's *unbridled racism* that indiscriminately penetrates, at all levels, movements and parties both to the left and to the right with the exception of some minor political forces. It would be wrong to

1 Nalletto G., "Racism's many, endless settings", Lunaria (edited by), *Chronicles of Ordinary Racism. Third White Paper on Racism in Italy*, 2014, p. 147: [www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Last\\_english\\_version\\_Libro\\_Bianco.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Last_english_version_Libro_Bianco.pdf)

make inopportune generalizations, but those who try to oppose these xenophobic and securitarian drifts seem to be part of a minority shrinking day by day.

The ambiguities of democratic racism we mentioned in our first *White Paper* seem to have been overcome (2009):<sup>2</sup> differences in style and language that were still traceable at the time are almost gone; the propaganda and actions of several members of both the major party and much of the main opposition movement have abandoned any shame, thus reproducing, in some cases in an outstanding way, the exact vocabulary, arguments and modes of communication developed by the right, as well as many of the institutional practices by them established.

This premise is indispensable in order to reconstruct how the world of Italian politics has confronted the arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers in recent years.

Three Governments and three Council Presidents all defined as “center-left”. Two Interior Ministers: the first inherited from the demise of the Popolo della Libertà; the second former leader of the Italian Communist Party. A minister for Integration (only in the Letta Government), the first “black” to hold such position, and a House President, both women, left practically alone by government and parliament colleagues to face (albeit only verbally) expressions of the most vulgar racism.

In Parliament more than one third of its members (321) changed party allegiance during the legislature.<sup>3</sup> The consolidation of new formations and political movements such as the 5 Star Movement, the birth of new parties such as Sinistra Italiana and Articolo 1, the split of the Partito Democratico. A new President of the Republic, less inclined to protagonism than his predecessor. Many local administrations passed in the hands of the right after the most recent elections. This, in the context of a Europe where, with the May 2014 elections, nationalist, xenophobic and racist movements and parties are increasing gaining foothold. This the context in which public policies on immigration and asylum are deployed during the current legislature, showing, above all, a schism separating the Letta Government both from those who preceded it and those who followed and not only regarding diversity of style in public rhetoric.

In a potential history of Italian migration policies, the Letta Government would be remembered for the launch of the *Mare Nostrum* mission; the Renzi Government for putting an end to it; the Gentiloni Government for having made

a leap back in time relaunching a political rhetoric and normative practices that confine the phenomenon of migration and asylum within a rigid prohibitionist and securitarian framework that takes into account serious violations of human rights, including the death of many innocent victims, considering them *inevitable collateral damage*.

But the Gentiloni government, above all thanks to the initiative of the Minister of the Interior, would also be remembered for having carried out an extraordinary reversal of principles and priorities: the safeguarding of borders is explicitly placed before the salvation of people's lives; legality bent to security needs; humanitarian intervention criminalized as the worst of crimes.

### Fact: keep them out

The lives lost in the Mediterranean in an attempt to reach Europe were 3,419 in 2014; 3,771 in 2015; over 5,000 in 2016; and 2100 in 2017 (data at the end of June):<sup>4</sup> a true massacre of over 14,000 innocent victims in three and a half years *since* that “never again” proclaimed by the then Prime Minister Letta, in the wake of the October 3, 2013, massacre, which claimed 366 victims.

This is the primary fact we must face today, while the shameful criminalization of NGOs providing relief to migrants in danger is underway. Those who welcome the initiatives taken by the Government to put the NGOs under control and limit their humanitarian actions are, in fact, in agreement to kill thousands more women, men and children. Thus, making themselves *accomplices* of an announced massacre that will be even vaster than the one, intolerable, already taken place so far. Though, thanks to recent initiatives, it is likely to happen in the shadows, as much is done to eliminate uncomfortable witnesses.

The choice to launch the *Mare Nostrum* military mission adopted by the Letta Government had, at least, the merit of making a priority of the rescue and salvage of people's lives and allowed, according to official data, to save around 100 thousand people in a year.<sup>5</sup> *Mare Nostrum* was abruptly abolished in October 2014 by the Renzi government for primarily economic reasons: the estimated average monthly cost was about 9.5 million. The European *Triton* operation,

2 Rivera A., “Il circolo vizioso del razzismo”, pp. 15-16, in Naletto G. (edited by), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, manifestolibri, 2009, available here: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/rapportosulrazzismo.pdf](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/rapportosulrazzismo.pdf)

3 See the data provided by Openpolis available here: [blog.openpolis.it/2017/06/14/7-quota-500-cambi-gruppo-in-parlamento/15623](http://blog.openpolis.it/2017/06/14/7-quota-500-cambi-gruppo-in-parlamento/15623)

4 See data released by UNHCR: [www.corriere.it/cronache/14\\_dicembre\\_10/3419-morti-mediterraneo-2014-bilancio-record-mai-cosi-tanti-90653bfc-802f-11e4-bf7c-95a1b87351f5.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/14_dicembre_10/3419-morti-mediterraneo-2014-bilancio-record-mai-cosi-tanti-90653bfc-802f-11e4-bf7c-95a1b87351f5.shtml); [www.unhcr.it/news/aggiornamenti/nuova-tragedia-nel-mediterraneo-circa-100-persone-disperse-oltre-cinquemila-morti-nel-2016.html](http://www.unhcr.it/news/aggiornamenti/nuova-tragedia-nel-mediterraneo-circa-100-persone-disperse-oltre-cinquemila-morti-nel-2016.html)

5 See: “Da Mare Nostrum a Frontex, tutti i numeri”, *Ansa*, October 31, 2014 available here: [www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2014/10/31/da-mare-nostrum-a-frontex-tutti-i-numeri\\_d05e9755-fc61-4a10-aab5-294ca930133c.html](http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2014/10/31/da-mare-nostrum-a-frontex-tutti-i-numeri_d05e9755-fc61-4a10-aab5-294ca930133c.html)



managed by the European agency *Frontex*, that followed it on November 1, 2014, has not performed the same function having had a much more limited funding (2.9 million a month), a more limited scope for action and, above all, because its priority mandate is to oversee the seas and the external borders, certainly not to provide relief at sea.

Concurrently with the interruption of the *Mare Nostrum* mission, Italy co-ordinated the European police operation *Mos Maiorum* with the aim of gathering information useful to counter the “facilitation of illegal immigration”.<sup>6</sup> Between October 18 and October 26, 2014, 18,000 law enforcement officers has patrolled border posts, stations, ports and airports in all EU countries carrying out detentions, arrests, interrogations and arbitrary incarcerations. Of 19,000 identified migrants (of whom 11,000 have filed for international protection), 257 “traffickers” were arrested.

2015 was the year of the humanitarian crisis in the eastern Mediterranean which involved primarily Greece and the countries crossed by the Balkan route. A crisis that, as Annamaria Rivera clearly points out in her contribution, has put Europe on its knees politically. Here we limit ourselves to focus on the choices of the Italian Government partially imposed by, and partially subsequently justified with, the increased concentration of the EU institutions on combating illegal migration. It is in fact under pressure from Europe and following the adoption of the European Agenda for Immigration by the European Commission in May 2015 that the Italian Government decides to “render more efficient” – not excluding the use of force – the procedures for identifying migrants arriving on the Italian coasts. And to employ as *hotspots* some of the existing government centers (in Lampedusa, Taranto, Pozzallo and Trapani), just when the legislative decree 142 / 2015 which redesigns the Italian reception system was issued (in which they were not predicted).<sup>7</sup> The purpose of *hotspots* – closed structures difficult to access for organizations for the protection of asylum seekers and the media – is above all to facilitate the *selection* of so-called economic migrants and international protection applicants in order to reject, expel and repatriate more easily the former.<sup>8</sup> As

some humanitarian organizations have denounced<sup>9</sup>, the lack of a national legal framework has resulted in hasty, sometimes intimidating, identification processes, which often does not actually guarantee the right to seek international protection. Moreover, in the *hotspots* the presence of minors – who should instead be allocated in appointed facilities – has been repeatedly recorded.<sup>10</sup>

Within the European Union a long negotiation regarding the strategy of selecting asylum seekers led to the signing of an agreement with Turkey on March 18, 2016: 3 billion euro granted to a country responsible for the worst violations of human rights, with the aim of blocking the Balkan route and thus preventing the arrival of refugees, largely from Syria, in Europe. The Italian Government welcomed the signing of the agreement, considering it a useful *precedent* for the establishment of similar agreements with some African countries, including Libya. The statement issued by then President of the Renzi Council is revealing:

“We welcome the agreement with Turkey, but it must be clear that, once made, an agreement with Turkey will set a precedent. In other words, we need to know that for the Mediterranean countries – from which we expect a significant number of people, not an invasion as some say, but still a significant number of arrivals – the same rules should apply as those valid for Turkey”.<sup>11</sup>

Words that anticipate the outsourcing strategy of the right to asylum now under way, as a result of the overturning of the goals of international cooperation with third countries, countries of origin and transit of migration from the southern Mediterranean. With the dissemination of the so-called Migration Compact in April 2016,<sup>12</sup> the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Sudan on 3 August 2016<sup>13</sup> and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Libya

*dures (SOP) applicabili agli Hotspots Italiani*, 2015. Available here: [www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/hotspots\\_sops\\_-\\_versione\\_italiana.pdf](http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/hotspots_sops_-_versione_italiana.pdf)

9 Among these Asgi, Oxfam and the campaign *Lasciateci entrare*.

10 The case of Pozzallo is the best known one. See, for example, Human Rights Watch complaints: [www.hrw.org/it/news/2016/06/23/291296](http://www.hrw.org/it/news/2016/06/23/291296) and those of Senator Luigi Manconi [www.abuondiritto.it/it/notizie/1325-quei-minori-negli-hotspot-non-ci-dovrebbero-stare.html](http://www.abuondiritto.it/it/notizie/1325-quei-minori-negli-hotspot-non-ci-dovrebbero-stare.html).

11 See: “Migranti, Renzi: ‘Accordo Ue-Turchia sarà precedente per altri Paesi’”, *La Stampa*, March 17, 2016, [www.lastampa.it/2016/03/17/multimedia/esteri/migranti-renzi-accordo-ueturchia-sar-precedente-per-altri-paesi-RUGTyGsrGHw6EWx4OvLzL/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2016/03/17/multimedia/esteri/migranti-renzi-accordo-ueturchia-sar-precedente-per-altri-paesi-RUGTyGsrGHw6EWx4OvLzL/pagina.html)

12 Available here: [www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/immigrazione\\_0.pdf](http://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/immigrazione_0.pdf)

13 Available here: [www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/accordo-polizia-Italia-Sudan\\_rev.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/accordo-polizia-Italia-Sudan_rev.pdf)

6 For details on the purpose of the operation, see: [www.statewatch.org/news/2014/sep/eu-council-2014-07-10-11671-mos-maioum-jpo.pdf](http://www.statewatch.org/news/2014/sep/eu-council-2014-07-10-11671-mos-maioum-jpo.pdf)

7 Legislative decree 142/2015, available here: [www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/09/15/15G00158/sg](http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/09/15/15G00158/sg), has transposed Directive 2013/33 / EU on the rules for the reception of applicants for protection international and common procedures for the recognition and revocation of international protection status.

8 Italian Ministry of the Interior, Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, and Department of Public Security, *Procedure Operative Standard (SOP), Standard Operating Proce-*



on 2 February 2017,<sup>14</sup> co-operation (and the resources that come from it) is conditional on the collaboration of these countries to combat so-called “illegal” migrations. The 2017 Budget Law also provides for a new budget chapter for the financial coverage of the so-called *Fondo per l’Africa* (€ 200 million) with the aim of avoiding “irregular” migrants by combating human trafficking through cooperation with 13 African countries: the signing of agreements and the implementation of joint projects with Libya, Tunisia and Niger is defined as a strategic priority.<sup>15</sup>

In short: in exchange for investments in infrastructure, equipment, technological supplies and local police training, the Italian government calls on the main countries of origin and transit of migrants arriving in Italy to “collaborate” to stop migration flows and to facilitate repatriation operations.<sup>16</sup>

The closure of any legal entry route for work reasons (in the last three years token entry fees have been established for seasonal workers) is the corollary of a strategy not to “let them in”, which has been unsuccessful and nevertheless cynically repeated.

### Facts: the “exceptional” admittance divides the Belpaese

The numerous initiatives promoted not to “let them in” have, in any case, failed to stop the arrivals of migrants from the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The number of people that arrived in our country were respectively 170,100 in 2014, 153,842 in 2015 and 181,436 in 2016,<sup>17</sup> creating new tensions in the Italian reception system, so far inadequate to meet a demand for reception undoubtedly much higher than in the past.

As already pointed out elsewhere,<sup>18</sup> the main causes of this inadequacy are certainly the delay with which the requirements of the National Reception Plan

– launched in July 2014 by the Government, the Regions and local authorities (inter-institutional coordination, distribution of acceptance on the territory) – have been translated into concrete political choices at national level along with the resistance of many municipalities to host new reception centers in their own territory. This has prevented the structuring and consolidation of an ordinary, coordinated and uniform reception system throughout the country: our country hosted 66,066 people in 2014, 103,792 in 2015 and 176,554 in 2016, but the request for reception (for 137,218 people at the end of 2016) was largely met by resorting to extraordinary facilities from the prefectures. By the end of 2016, the Ordinary Reception System (*sistema di accoglienza ordinario, Sprar*) hosted only 23,882 people. The adoption of a new regulation of the Sprar system in August 2016, with which the Ministry of the Interior intends to encourage the participation of municipalities and promote greater distribution of *Sprar* projects throughout the country, the publication of a new call for tender for the three-year period 2017-2019 as well as the launch of a new national hosting plan in September 2016 have yet to produce any significant trend reversal.

These emergency procedures have exposed the system to an increase of conflicts in the regions, to levels of standards that do not guarantee a dignified reception for people seeking asylum, as well as an increase in the network of managing bodies of operatives without the necessary experience and, in addition, a bad use of public resources. The judiciary inquiries involving the managing bodies of various reception facilities, in particular the one, in terms of extent, relevance and media visibility, regarding *Mafia Capitale*,<sup>19</sup> have thus added new topics of dramatization to an already distorted public debate. The clash between the Interior Ministry and the local authorities (especially in the North) on the distribution of asylum seekers in their territories, the controversies regarding the “costs” and the unsustainability of reception, the alarming and dramatic representation of arrivals by the media, the new leading role of the Northern League, the right-wing parties and movements, and the securitarian shift of many Democratic administrators, have heavily contributed to the *polarization* process that today, much more clearly than in the past, seems to have produced a split in the public opinion, with particular reference to the issue of the reception of migrants and asylum seekers.

A *widespread culture of rejection*<sup>20</sup> has more or less spontaneously, and more or

14 Available here: [www.repubblica.it/esteri/2017/02/02/news/migranti\\_accordo\\_italia-libia\\_ecco\\_cosa\\_contiene\\_in\\_memorandum-157464439/](http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2017/02/02/news/migranti_accordo_italia-libia_ecco_cosa_contiene_in_memorandum-157464439/)

15 The potentially eligible countries mentioned in the decree establishing the fund are: Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia. The decree text is available here: [www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2017/02/decreto\\_africa\\_0.pdf](http://www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2017/02/decreto_africa_0.pdf)

16 Sbilanciamoci!, *Rapporto 2017. Come usare la spesa pubblica per i diritti, la pace, l’ambiente*, 2017, available here: [controfinanziaria.sbilanciamoci.org/](http://controfinanziaria.sbilanciamoci.org/)

17 See the data published periodically by the Ministry of the Interior, available here: [www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero](http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero)

18 See Lunaria, *Il mondo di dentro. Il sistema di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati a Roma*, November 2016, available here: [www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Il\\_mondo\\_di\\_dentro.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Il_mondo_di_dentro.pdf)

19 Cf., [www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/07/june-29-co-operative-italy-rome](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/07/june-29-co-operative-italy-rome), translator’s note.

20 See Lunaria, (edited by), *Accoglienza. La propaganda e le proteste del rifiuto, le scelte istituzio-*

less aggressively, informed social practices against reception procedures in the regions and have, in some cases, prevented their implementation.<sup>21</sup> Exponents and council members of the Partito Democratico have launched initiatives similar to those promoted by their counterparts: from the ban on offering food and rescue to asylum seekers imposed by the mayor of Ventimiglia, the announcement by the mayor of Codigoro that she intends to introduce inspections and taxation for property owners who host asylum seekers,<sup>22</sup> to the repeated expulsion of the Baobab Experience in Rome. In the latter case, the administration is governed by the 5 Star Movement and the mayor, following the example of numerous majors of the Northern League and the Partito Democratico in center and northern Italy, has formally requested the Prefect to avoid the opening of new reception facilities in the capital.<sup>23</sup>

### **Fact: the “integrated” strategy of the Minniti era**

It is not surprising then, that what occurred at a reception center in January provided the opportunity for the new Minister of Interior Minniti, a few days after his inauguration, to present the media with his “new” strategy for immigration and asylum.

On January 2, 2017, Sandrine Bakayoko, a 25-year-old asylum seeker from the Ivory Coast, died of pulmonary thrombosis in the former Conetta military base where she was held together with 1,300 fellow asylum seekers. The complaints and protests spurred on by some of her companions, according to which the relief efforts arrived with a significant delay, triggered many controversies. This only a few days away from the jihadist matrix attack in Berlin, the successive killing of its author, Amis Amri, by two Italian agents at Sesto San Giovanni, and the Istanbul attack.

*nali sbagliate*, January 2017. In the dossier, Lunaria has documented at least 210 episodes of “rejection” of reception in 2016 among simple public verbal declarations, propaganda tools (posters, banners, flyers) and public initiatives (petitions, open letters, demonstrations).

21 In the third chapter, we recall one of the most striking cases: the Gorino revolt that in October 2016 prevented the Prefecture from hosting 12 asylum-seeking women and 8 children in a hostel in the small town.

22 See: [www.huffingtonpost.it/2017/08/05/la-sindaca-pd-di-codigoro-alice-zanardi-vuole-alzare-le-tasse-ai\\_a\\_23066061/](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2017/08/05/la-sindaca-pd-di-codigoro-alice-zanardi-vuole-alzare-le-tasse-ai_a_23066061/). The announcement of the major follows a similar initiative undertaken by two majors (Northern League) in Pontinvrea (SV) and Diano Marina (Im) in March 2017, see here: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/tassare-laccoglienza-nuove-forme-rifiuto/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/tassare-laccoglienza-nuove-forme-rifiuto/)

23 See in this regard: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/raggi-no-accoglienza-migranti-roma/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/raggi-no-accoglienza-migranti-roma/)

Acknowledging that “the battle is political, cultural, about communication,” the Minister released a long interview with the weekly *L'Espresso*, in which he anticipates the outlines of his security and immigration program.<sup>24</sup> Presented as a “breakthrough” by most mainstream media, the so-called “Minniti Plan” fundamentally goes down the same road previously traveled by earlier governments of both left and right (in the latter, the Minister has always held senior posts).<sup>25</sup>

Compared to the past, the real novelty is the clever rhetoric with which he boasts a new left-wing model of “integrated security”.<sup>26</sup> Based on “strictness and hospitality”, this model together with measures on issues of immigration and urban security adopted in a matter of months, find a weak opposition within his party (not only among cadres, but also among its declining militants) while meeting the support of the vast majority of mainstream media, the highest office of state and, consequently, winning over the general public's assent thus making Minniti one of the most popular ministers of the Gentiloni government.<sup>27</sup>

The strategy to curb the growth of the Italian right is very simple: through endorsing many of the choices (or proposals) made by them in the past. The formula is undoubtedly the same but the speed with which the Minister acts is surprising. In just over seven months, two decree-laws reform the international protection procedure abolishing the second instance of appeal thus strongly restricting the applicants' legal protection; “volunteer work for the guests of the reception centers” is introduced; the Centres for Identification and Expulsion (Centri di Identificazione e Espulsione [Cie]) are reinstated in each region; new

24 Damilano M., “Marco Minniti: Vi racconto il mio piano sicurezza. Che da oggi è una parola di sinistra”, *L'Espresso*, January 9, 2017. Available here: [espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2017/01/05/news/marco-minniti-vi-racconto-il-mio-piano-sicurezza-che-da-oggi-e-una-parola-di-sinistra-1.292954](http://espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2017/01/05/news/marco-minniti-vi-racconto-il-mio-piano-sicurezza-che-da-oggi-e-una-parola-di-sinistra-1.292954)

25 The Minister was Under Secretary of the Council Presidency in the D'Alema Government (1998-1999) and Defense in the Amato Government (1998-2001), Deputy Minister of Interior in the Second Prodi Government (2006-2008). Since 2013, he has been Under Secretary of the Presidency of the Council with a mandate to secret services in the Letta Government (May 2013-February 2014) and the Renzi Government (February 2014 – December 2016).

26 “For some time I have been having an idea: dispel the taboo that security policies are a right-wing issue ‘par excellence’. It is true that a security impulse in society and public opinion often leads to a shift to the right of the electorate, but I have always believed that security is bread for the teeth of the left. Modern security policies are integrated: not only repression, as the right-wing thinks, not just social welfare interventions, as a part of the Left believed. And only a reformist left-wing political culture that does not simplify the answers can attempt to find an integrated solution to the security question.”, in Damilano cit.

27 See the results of an Ipsos survey published March 31, 2017 in *Corriere della Sera* available here: [www.corriere.it/politica/17\\_aprile\\_01/minniti-piu-gradito-ministri-df24222c-164a-11e7-b176-94ba31b8546a.shtml?refresh\\_ce-cp](http://www.corriere.it/politica/17_aprile_01/minniti-piu-gradito-ministri-df24222c-164a-11e7-b176-94ba31b8546a.shtml?refresh_ce-cp)

resources for repatriation operations are allocated and the mayors powers in the field of urban safety is increased.<sup>28</sup> Two new agreements are concluded with the Interior Ministers of Chad and Libya as well as an agreement with the Fezzan Tribes of Southern Libya and a memorandum of understanding with the Favez Mustafa Serraj's Government of National Reconciliation to gain greater co-operation in the control of migratory flows to the north and south of the country. Four, of the ten promised, patrol vessel are sent to the Libyan Coast Guard and Parliament's consent is obtained for sending navy ships to Libyan waters in support of sea and border surveillance. The Minister meets with 13 mayors of the Libyan coastal communities and of the south of the country in order to fortify its southern borders in exchange for resources (200 million EU funds) adding to those promised to Niger (50 million) for the same purpose.<sup>29</sup> NGOs that provide sea rescue are being blackmailed by the imposition of a Code of Conduct that requires the presence of armed agents on the vessels and the ban on relocating migrants to other ships.<sup>30</sup> All this is supported by an aggressive communication campaign heating up an already sufficiently polarized public debate, legitimizing, as never before (on the initiative of a minister who continues to define himself left-wing) a widespread sentiment of intolerance and hostility against migrants and against all the civil society actors working for their protection, which today seems to have become common opinion. Not even the former Minister Amato of the last Prodi government had gone that far. A perfect strategy to nourish xenophobia and racism at the social level and, instead of undermining the mounting support of the xenophobic right, facilitating their return to government.

### **The crime of “clandestinity”, time of detention and citizenship: back to square one**

What's more. The strategy of fear produced by the last government of the legislature also undermines the few steps forward that in the last three years had

been made by parliamentary initiative. The European Law 2013-bis of October 30, 2014, “Provisions for the fulfillment of obligations arising from Italy's membership in the European Union”, had reduced the maximum duration of stay in the Centers for Identification and Expulsion (Cie) from 180 to 30 days, extending up to a maximum of 90 days.<sup>31</sup> A reform that only partially responded to the demands of civil society (which has long been calling for the closure of the Centers for Identification and Expulsion due to multiple violations of human rights found within them), but at least significantly reduced the period of maximum detention, considering the uselessness of prolonged detention for the purposes of the identification and repatriation of migrants that have received an expulsion order. This result was made possible thanks to the joint commitment of civil society organizations and the Extraordinary Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the Senate, which reserved two reports and various hearings to the Centres for Identification and Expulsion, in the context of a cognitive investigation into the standards and procedures of the protection of human rights.<sup>32</sup>

Fine. Legislative decree no. 142/2015 extended the maximum detention period for asylum seekers up to 12 months, while Law No. 46/2017 provided for a similar prolongation for migrants who had served a prison term, as well as for rejected asylum seekers “when there is good reason to believe the asylum application to be instrumental”. Prolonged detention periods for all those affected by a deportation order and that are being detained in the renamed *residence centers for repatriation* (Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio [ex Cie]) are not far off.

With enabling act No.67 / 2014 (Article 2), which entered into force on May 17, 2014, Parliament mandated the Government to abolish the “illegal entry and stay”

31 See: [www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2014/11/10/14G00174/sg](http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2014/11/10/14G00174/sg)

32 Among the many initiatives of civil society, the visits and the reports of the campaign Lasciateci centrare are reported ([www.lasciatecicentrare.it](http://www.lasciatecicentrare.it)), the visits and reports made by the association Medu ([www.mediciperidrittumani.org](http://www.mediciperidrittumani.org)), the denunciation of the inhumanity and inefficiency of Cie's system analyzed by Lunaria in the report *Costi disumani. La spesa pubblica per il “contrasto dell'immigrazione” irregolare*, 2013 ([www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web\\_def.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web_def.pdf)). The findings of the cognitive investigation promoted by the Senate's Extraordinary Commission for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights have been gathered in the *Rapporto sui Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione* released in September 2014, available here: [www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/repository/commissioni/dirittumaniXVII/Rapporto\\_CIE\\_24\\_settembre\\_2014\\_Comm\\_DD.pdf](http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/repository/commissioni/dirittumaniXVII/Rapporto_CIE_24_settembre_2014_Comm_DD.pdf) subsequent updates were published in February 2016, [www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/repository/commissioni/dirittumaniXVII/rapporto\\_cie.pdf](http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/repository/commissioni/dirittumaniXVII/rapporto_cie.pdf) and January 2017: [www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/Cie\\_rapporto\\_aggiornato\\_2\\_gennaio\\_2017.pdf](http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/Cie_rapporto_aggiornato_2_gennaio_2017.pdf)

28 The two Decrees were converted into Law in April 2017. This is the Law of April 13, 2017, no. 46, of conversion, with modifications, of Decree-Law February 17, 2017, no. 13, on *Disposizioni urgenti per l'accelerazione dei procedimenti in materia di protezione internazionale, nonché per il contrasto dell'immigrazione illegale* and the Law of April 18, 2017 n. 48, of conversion with modifications of Decree-Law February 20, 2017 n. 14 on *Disposizioni urgenti in materia di sicurezza delle città*. For further information, see Lunaria, *Il mondo di dentro. Il sistema di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati a Roma*, cit.

29 See: Ludovico M., “Minniti rilancia sulla Libia con una dote di 200 milioni”, *Ristretti orizzonti*, available here: [www.ristretti.org/Le-Notizie-di-Ristretti/migranti-minniti-rilancia-sulla-libia-con-una-dote-di-200-milioni](http://www.ristretti.org/Le-Notizie-di-Ristretti/migranti-minniti-rilancia-sulla-libia-con-una-dote-di-200-milioni)

30 See Chapter 3 for an overview on the campaign against the NGOs.

offense.<sup>33</sup> The law passed following an intense public debate on the issue launched by some parliamentarians in the days following the massacre off Lampedusa on October 3, 2013. The Government has yet to legislate, and it is unlikely that it will within by end of this legislature. The most paradoxical and incomprehensible of the unfinished reforms is certainly that of the Law on Citizenship. In the waiting for at least 20 years by the anti-racist movement and the associations representing young people of the so-called second generation, strong in popular support with more than 100,000 signatures, supported (in words) since 2012 by the most important state offices, by the leaders of the relative majority party and much of the media, this reform has been at the center of a real odyssey. The end can only be written after the legislature closes, but the news we have today does not allow us to be optimistic.

The text, approved by the Chamber on October 13, 2015, and now at a standstill in the Senate, is the result of a watered-down compromise between the various parties and has a much smaller range of application compared to the original proposal that initiated the parliamentary process, presented by civil society more than five years ago, in the context of the campaign “L’Italia sono anch’io”.<sup>34</sup>

The agreement reached at the time between Partito Democratico, Nuovo Centro Destra, Scelta Civica and Popolari per l’Italia has significantly restricted the number of people who can acquire citizenship following the reform.

Contrary to what is represented in the mishmash of the media and the political debate, the proposed bill does not foresee the introduction of *jus soli* at birth. The recognition of citizenship at birth is intended for children of at least one foreign parent holding an EU residence permit for long-term residents (which can only be obtained after five years of *residence* in Italy and in the presence of certain conditions of income and accommodation) and not automatically, but at the parent’s request. Minors who arrived in Italy before the age of twelve (always at

the instance of a parent in this case regularly resident) also have the possibility of acquiring Italian citizenship provided that they have concluded an entire school program and, in the case of primary school, have obtained the elementary license. The bill does not foresee any reform of the rules governing naturalization for adult foreigners (for which a ten-year residence permit in Italy is required by law).

Fine. Reaching an agreement in the Chamber took over two and a half years, and the debate in the Senate committee never took place, due to the obstructionism of the Northern League (7 thousand amendments tabled), but also and above all, because the majority party preferred to give priority to other matters.

The Partito Democratico could have avoided waiting for another two years before giving up the debate in the Senate and instead bringing it directly to the floor for debate in the Chamber of Deputies.

This they did not do: only thanks to the relentless pressure of the promoters of L’Italia sono anch’io and the new movement #italianisenzacittadinanza (young people without citizenship), this passage took place on June 15, 2017.

A few months after the elections, and in the context of a public debate deliberately polarizing around the alarms associated with migration flows, the Partito Democratico’s representatives, starting with their secretary, staged a farcical show constantly oscillating between the verbal reassurances about imminent approval of the reform, their presence in the streets next to civil society movements calling for reform and the *one step forward, two steps back* suggested by the President of the Council in office, the outcome of the latest administrative elections and the Northern League’s obvious instrumentalization of the debate.

Meanwhile Alfano, leader of Alternativa Popolare (formerly Nuovo Centrodestra), looking for a role in the next legislature, refrained from endorsing the reform. Officially the discussion is postponed to September. We hope to be wrong, but autumn is the season when the budget law is debated: deferral is likely to turn into a definitive *back to square one*.

33 This is the Delegation Law no. 67/2014 (Article 2) “Delegations to the Government on Non-Detention Penalty Penalties and Reform of the Penalty System. Provisions on the suspension of the procedure by testing and against unreachable”, the text is available here: [www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2014/05/02/14G00070/sg](http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2014/05/02/14G00070/sg)

34 The bill of popular initiative, delivered to the Chamber on March 7, 2012, provided for the right to citizenship to children of foreign origin born in Italy with at least one parent regularly resident in Italy *for a year or at least one parent born in Italy*, the possibility to apply for citizenship, within two years of the age of majority, for minors entering Italy before the age of 10; the possibility for foreign adults to apply for citizenship *after five years of regular residence in Italy*; the transfer of expertise on adult naturalization to mayors and a estimate that would guarantee the timing of the procedure. See: [www.litaliasonoanchio.it/fileadmin/materiali\\_italiaanchio/pdf/Cittadinanza\\_PROGETTO\\_DI\\_LEGGE.pdf](http://www.litaliasonoanchio.it/fileadmin/materiali_italiaanchio/pdf/Cittadinanza_PROGETTO_DI_LEGGE.pdf)



## Crimes of solidarity

Sergio Bontempelli

### Criminalizing solidarity: the temptation of restrictive policies

#### *Close the taps: restrictive orthodoxy and migrations*

For decades, the restrictive migratory policies adopted by European countries have contributed to infuse in the ruling classes a “greatly simplified view of migration” – in the words of Giuseppe Sciortino<sup>1</sup> – today still hegemonic in public discourse. This “simplified view” conceals the complexity of migratory phenomena and the multiplicity of causes that determine and guide them. People’s mobility is thus reduced to a banal play of push and pull factors, or even *incentives* and *disincentives*: according to a consolidated hydraulic metaphor,<sup>2</sup> it would be enough to “close the tap” – that is to oversee the borders – to achieve a consistent reduction in arrivals.

Today we know that this is not the case. From the seventies to the present, Europe has been crossed by multiple migratory movements, despite prohibitionist policies. On the other hand, a very large scientific literature shows that flows originate from a wide range of factors: the greater or lesser “generosity” in reception, as well as entry and stay rules, are only *one element among many*, and whose consequences are not at all linear (it is not obvious that opening policies generate new flows, nor that more restrictive choices have a “deterrent” effect<sup>3</sup>). This simplified image of immigration, however, has all the features of an *ideology*, or a “toxic narrative” according to Wu Ming’s definition:<sup>4</sup> and like all toxic narratives, it has established itself by denying reality.

1 See G. Sciortino, *L’ambizione della frontiera. Le politiche di controllo migratorio in Europa*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2000, p. 94.

2 See M. Maneri, *I media e la guerra alle migrazioni*, in S. Palidda (edited by), *Razzismo democratico. La persecuzione degli stranieri in Europa*, Agenzia X, Milano 2009, pp. 66-85, in particular pp. 80-81. On the “hydraulic metaphor” see also A. Dal Lago, *Non-persone. L’esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2004, p. 162.

3 Literature is full of examples of the “counterintensive” effects of public regulation. For example, it has been observed that restrictive policies may in some cases increase flows rather than diminish them. See, at least, M. Ambrosini, *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, il Mulino, Bologna 2005, pp. 47-52; M. C. Chiuri, N. Coniglio e G. Ferri, *L’esercito degli invisibili. Aspetti economici dell’immigrazione clandestina*, il Mulino, Bologna 2007, in particolare pp. 102-105.

4 “To become ‘toxic narrative’” writes the Collective Wu Ming, “a story must always be told from the same point of view, in the same way and with the same words, always omitting the same

#### *Solidarity: a “tap” to close*

Following the hydraulic metaphor, even solidarity actions for migrants put in place by individual citizens, associations or activist groups can be seen as *incentives*, hence as “taps” to close.

It is no coincidence that the history of restrictive policies is full of attempts to *criminalize* humanitarian assistance to irregular (or so presumed) migrants. As far back as in 1973, the French Interior Minister ordered the expulsion of the Swiss Protestant pastor and pro-immigrant activist Berthier Perregaux.<sup>5</sup> In 1990, Germany approved a law that compared providing assistance to irregular migrants to “facilitating illegal immigration”, and many Protestant shepherds and Catholic priests were put on trial.<sup>6</sup>

In 1998, Italy adopted a rule clearly distinguishing “aiding and abetting” from “humanitarian assistance”. This has not prevented volunteers and activists from being pursued. One example is the NGO Cap Anamur, denounced in 2004 for rescuing several migrants from a shipwreck, and then fully acquitted by the Agrigento Court in 2009.<sup>8</sup> Expression of a distorted image of migratory

details, removing the same context elements and complexity” (Wu Ming, “Storie #notav. Un anno e mezzo nella vita di Marco Bruno”, *Wu Ming Foundation blog*, July 1, 2013: [www.wuming-foundation.com/giap/2013/07/storie-notav-un-anno-e-mezzo-nella-vita-di-marco-bruno/](http://www.wuming-foundation.com/giap/2013/07/storie-notav-un-anno-e-mezzo-nella-vita-di-marco-bruno/)).

5 See Y. Gastaut, *La flambée raciste de 1973 en France*, in “Revue européenne des migrations internationales”, 9(2), 1993, pp. 61-75; the story is briefly summarized at p. 65. On the history of “*délit de solidarité*” in France see, Gisti (Groupe d’information et de soutien des immigrés), *Délit de solidarité: les origines*, in “Plein droit”, 82, 2009, pp. I-VIII.

6 See T. Calandrino, *Country Report: Germany*, in S. Bellezza e T. Calandrino, *Criminalization of Flight and Escape Aid*, Borderline-Europe, Berlino 2017, [www.borderline-europe.de/sites/default/files/background/kidem-doc-final-2-5-17.pdf](http://www.borderline-europe.de/sites/default/files/background/kidem-doc-final-2-5-17.pdf), pp. 138-167, in particular pp. 141-142; G. Sciortino, *L’ambizione della frontiera*, cit. pp. 138-139.

7 According to art. 10 of the Turco-Napolitano Law “aid and humanitarian assistance provided in Italy to foreigners under conditions of necessity present in the territory of the State does not constitute a crime in” (Law 40 of 6 March 1998, “Immigration Discipline and rules on the state of foreigners”, Article 10, paragraph 2). This norm, still in force, is now contained in art. 12th paragraph 2 of the Consolidated Law on Immigration (Legislative Decree 286 of July 1998, No 286, “Consolidated Law on Immigration Rules and Standards on the Status of a Foreigner” and subsequent mod.). Although the rule only addresses assistance to foreigners already present in the territory, the policy could also apply to humanitarian relief abroad, i.e. at the stage of entry into Italy. See veda P. Morozzo della Rocca, *Immigrazione, asilo e cittadinanza: discipline e orientamenti giurisprudenziali*, Maggioli Editore, Santarcangelo di Romagna – Rimini 2015, p. 290; M. De Giorgio, *I delitti di favoreggiamento delle migrazioni illegali*, in L. Degl’Innocenti (a cura di), *Stranieri irregolari e diritto penale*, Giuffrè, Milano 2011, pp. 35-77, in particular pp. 70-72.

8 A detailed collection of case articles can be found on the website Melting Pot at: [www.meltingpot.org/+Cap-Anamur-+.html](http://www.meltingpot.org/+Cap-Anamur-+.html)



phenomena, as well as a *securitarian* conception of the management of migration, the temptation to *criminalize disinterested help and humanitarian assistance* has always accompanied prohibitionist immigration policies.

## The European context

### *The Frontex offensive against Mare Nostrum*

“With *Mare Nostrum* the number of arrivals drastically increased. I fear it generated a pull factor and that traffickers have abused of the proximity of operations on the Libyan coast to put more people at sea”.<sup>9</sup> Statement of Gil Arias-Fernandéz, Executive Director of Frontex – European Border and Coast Guard Agency- at a hearing in the European Parliament in September 2014.

This is, as we have seen, a typical argument of the prohibitionist imagery: *Mare Nostrum* had the task of saving migrants from shipwrecks, *thus* creating an *incentive* to arrive in Europe.<sup>10</sup> A simplistic syllogism denied by the facts: a study by Forensic Oceanography – a research institute linked to Goldsmiths University in London – clarified that due to the closure of *Mare Nostrum* deaths at sea had increased,<sup>11</sup> while the reduction in rescue operations had not produced results in terms of flow containment.<sup>12</sup> But *restrictive orthodoxy* ignores the denials of reality:

9 European Parliament, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (Libe), Hearing by Gil Arias-Fernandéz (Frontex), *Frontex Activities in the Mediterranean* (LIBE/8/01027), Bruxelles, September 4, 2014, cit. in D. Padoan, *Perché danno fastidio le Ong che salvano i migranti in mare?*, from the website Adif – Associazione Diritti e Frontiere, March 9, 2017, [www.adif.org/2017/03/09/perche-danno-fastidio-le-ong-che-salvano-i-migranti-in-mare/](http://www.adif.org/2017/03/09/perche-danno-fastidio-le-ong-che-salvano-i-migranti-in-mare/). The full video of the hearing is available on the European Parliament’s website [www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/it/committees/video?event=20140904-0930-COMMITTEE-LIBE](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/it/committees/video?event=20140904-0930-COMMITTEE-LIBE)

10 The operation *Mare Nostrum* was initiated by the Italian government following the tragedy of Lampedusa in Autumn 2013: it was run by the Navy and the Air Force, and provided for the patrol of the Mediterranean with the purpose of Sar (*Search and Rescue*). For this end it was also operational in open seas. Closed in November 2014, it was replaced by the *Triton* mission, led by Frontex, whose overriding objective was to impede irregular immigration. For a brief description of these missions, see “The Differences Between ‘Triton’ and ‘Mare Nostrum’”, *Il Post*, April 20, 2015: [www.ilpost.it/2015/04/20/differenze-triton-mare-nostrum/?1428330151](http://www.ilpost.it/2015/04/20/differenze-triton-mare-nostrum/?1428330151)

11 Forensic Oceanography and Watch the Med, *Death by RescUe, The Lethal Effects Of The EU’s Policies Of Non-assistance At Sea*, London 2016, [deathbyrescue.org/](http://deathbyrescue.org/). For a summary of the results of the research, see S. Liberti, “Uno studio dimostra che con la fine di *Mare Nostrum* muoiono più migranti”, *Internazionale*, April 18, 2016: [www.internazionale.it/opinione/stefano-liberti/2016/04/18/mare-nostrum-migranti-europa](http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/stefano-liberti/2016/04/18/mare-nostrum-migranti-europa)

12 Ironically, in 2015 – immediately after the closure of *Mare Nostrum* – arrivals by sea in Europe reached the record number of one million. See J. Clayton, H. Holland e T. Gaynor, *Over one million sea arrivals reach Europe in 2015*, Unhcr, December 30, 2015: [www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html](http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html)

*Mare Nostrum* has been closed, and despite the evidence nobody has ever thought about reopening it; European countries have drastically reduced rescue activities at sea, which are now being carried out mainly by the NGOs. Convinced that every action of solidarity represents a possible *pull factor*, Frontex thus turned its attention to the NGOs.

### *The first attack on NGOs*<sup>13</sup>

On December 15, 2016, the *Financial Times*<sup>14</sup> reported on two “confidential reports” from Frontex: according to rumors, the agency accused the NGOs of “colluding” with traffickers on the Italian-Libyan route. The NGOs had allegedly operated near Libyan territorial waters, in some cases in agreement with criminal organizations,<sup>15</sup> giving migrants indications “not to cooperate with the police”,<sup>16</sup> and had refused to collect evidence against traffickers. A few months later, on February 15, 2017, Frontex’s annual dossier<sup>17</sup> was published, retracing the two internal reports “unveiled” by the *Financial Times*. In an interview with the German newspaper *Die Welt*,<sup>18</sup> Agency Director Fabrice Leggeri raised the allegations: the Italian media campaign against the NGOs began based on these statements. We’ll get back to this.

### *“Crimes of solidarity”: spreading in Europe*

While on the one hand, the attack on NGOs seems to arise from a *conscious strategy* of Frontex, on the other hand, in all European countries, there is a growing *criminalization* of individual citizens and volunteers assisting migrants,<sup>19</sup> particularly refugees in transit: in this case not so much a concerted design as the spread of a political climate of *delegitimization of solidarity*.

13 From the documented reconstruction of D. Padoan, *Perché danno fastidio le Ong che salvano i migranti in mare?*, cit.

14 D. Robinson, “EU border force flags concerns over charities’ interaction with migrant smugglers”, *Financial Times*, December 15, 2016.

15 See G. M. Del Re, “Migranti, Frontex attacca le Ong: ‘Collusione coi trafficanti di morte’”, *Avvenire*, December 16, 2016: [www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/collusione-coi-trafficanti-di-morte-frontex-attacca-le-ong-bufera](http://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/collusione-coi-trafficanti-di-morte-frontex-attacca-le-ong-bufera)

16 G. M. Del Re, “Migranti, Frontex attacca le Ong: ‘Collusione coi trafficanti di morte’”, cit. 17 Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2017*, Frontex – European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Varsavia 2017, [frontex.europa.eu/news/frontex-publishes-risk-analysis-for-2017-CpJiC8](http://frontex.europa.eu/news/frontex-publishes-risk-analysis-for-2017-CpJiC8)

18 See M. Bewarder e L. Walter, “Rettungseinsätze vor Libyen müssen auf den Prüfstand”, in *Die Welt*, February 27, 2017: [www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article162394787/Rettungseinsae-tze-vor-Libyen-muessen-auf-den-Pruefstand.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article162394787/Rettungseinsae-tze-vor-Libyen-muessen-auf-den-Pruefstand.html)

19 For a overall picture see I. Sesana, “L’Europa contro la solidarietà. Se aiutare i migranti diventa reato”, *Altreconomia*, January 2017: [altreconomia.it/leuropa-la-solidarieta-aiutare-migranti-diventa-reato/](http://altreconomia.it/leuropa-la-solidarieta-aiutare-migranti-diventa-reato/)

Lisbeth Zornig Andersen is a wealthy Danish citizen. In 2015, seeing thousands of Syrian refugees making their way to Sweden, she set out to help them: giving hospitality to a family with children, she had also given them a car ride and had organized a solidarity network with other citizens willing to help. For these activities, Lisbeth was sentenced as a “facilitator” for illegal immigration.<sup>20</sup> In Denmark alone, between September 2015 and February 2016, 279 people were reported for such activities.<sup>21</sup> In January 2016, the Greek police arrested a group of volunteers from the NGO *Team Humanity and Proem Aid*. In this case, the rescue services provided by the NGO to refugees on the island of Lesbos<sup>22</sup> were under investigation. In Switzerland, in 2016, Lisa Bosia, a Socialist deputy in the Grand Council of Canton Ticino, was convicted for helping some refugees cross the border.<sup>23</sup>

But it is, above all, in France that the “crime of solidarity” (*délit de solidarité*) recorded a significant number of cases. Rob Lawrie, retired British military officer, was arrested in October 2015 for helping an Afghan girl leave the Calais “jungle” and reuniting with her family members in England. He was initially accused of “facilitating” (a criminal offense of detention in France); successively the Boulogne-sur-Mer court reduced the sentence to a fine for “endangering the lives of others”.<sup>24</sup> On February 10, 2017 Cédric Herrou, a farmer resident in Roia Valley (on the Italian border), was sentenced to a fine of three thousand euros for helping refugees cross the border.<sup>25</sup> Pierre-Alain Mannoni, a professor at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique

(Cnrs), also faced trial, for having transported three Eritrean refugees to the station of Nice.<sup>26</sup>

### *The legal framework*

The so-called “*Direttiva Favoreggiamento*” (Abetting Directive) of 2002 stipulates in Article 1 that Member States should adopt “appropriate sanctions” against those who favor “illegal immigration”: there are two distinct kinds of offenses, facilitating unauthorized entry (paragraph 1, [a] and facilitating unauthorized residence [point (b)]. In the case of facilitating unauthorized residence, it is considered an offense only if the action has been carried out *for profit*; in the case of facilitating unauthorized entry, States may “decide not to impose sanctions” (but are not obliged to do so) when the aid action is “intended to provide humanitarian assistance”.<sup>27</sup> As far as the laws of the Member States are concerned, the context differs. In Germany and Spain, for example, the offense of abetment exists only if the purpose of profit is established.<sup>28</sup> In Belgium, acting “for *primarily* humanitarian reasons”,<sup>29</sup> is not punishable by law but the adverb “primarily” leaves room for conflicting interpretations. Eight Member States (including Denmark and Greece) have not adopted the “humanitarian clause” in violation of the 2002 Directive.<sup>30</sup>

In France,<sup>31</sup> in 2012, then Interior Minister Manuel Valls had expanded “humanitarian clauses”, and the government had spoken of “abolishing the crime of solidarity”;<sup>32</sup> yet, with the new rules,<sup>33</sup> volunteers who facilitate unauthorized

20 See L. Zornig Andersen, “I was prosecuted for helping Syrian refugees”, *The Guardian*, December 20, 2016: [goo.gl/ReSXB1](http://goo.gl/ReSXB1); D. Crouch, “Danish children’s rights activist fined for people trafficking”, *The Guardian*, March 11, 2016: [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/11/danish-childrens-rights-activist-lisbeth-zornig-people-trafficking?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb#\\_=\\_](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/11/danish-childrens-rights-activist-lisbeth-zornig-people-trafficking?CMP=share_btn_fb#_=_)

21 See N. Sigona, “Rifugiati, perché aumentano i ‘reati di solidarietà’”, *Open Migration* (website by Cild Italia), March 16, 2016: [openmigration.org/idee/rifugiati-perche-aumentano-i-reati-di-solidarieta/](http://openmigration.org/idee/rifugiati-perche-aumentano-i-reati-di-solidarieta/)

22 See N. Sigona, “Rifugiati, perché aumentano i ‘reati di solidarietà’”, cit. A. Safdar, “NGOs decry charges against volunteers in Greece”, *Al Jazeera English*, January 16, 2016: [www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/ngos-decry-arrests-volunteer-lifeguards-greece-160116193522648.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/ngos-decry-arrests-volunteer-lifeguards-greece-160116193522648.html)

23 See C. Antonini, “Parla Lisa Bosia: ‘Il mio reato è la solidarietà ai migranti’”, *PopOff*, April 14, 2017: [popoffquotidiano.it/2017/04/14/lisa-bosia-reato-solidarieta-migranti/](http://popoffquotidiano.it/2017/04/14/lisa-bosia-reato-solidarieta-migranti/)

24 See “Mille euros d’amende avec sursis pour Rob Lawrie, qui avait aidé une fillette de la ‘jungle’ de Calais”, *Le Monde*, January 14, 2016: [www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2016/01/14/1-000-euros-d-amende-avec-sursis-pour-le-britannique-qui-avait-aide-une-fillette-de-la-jungle-de-calais\\_4847576\\_1653578.html#UocTslP0cDPIbG8G.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2016/01/14/1-000-euros-d-amende-avec-sursis-pour-le-britannique-qui-avait-aide-une-fillette-de-la-jungle-de-calais_4847576_1653578.html#UocTslP0cDPIbG8G.99)

25 See “Cédric Herrou, il contadino dalla parte dei migranti”, *Internazionale*, May 6, 2017: [www.internazionale.it/video/2017/05/06/cedric-herrou-migranti-francia-italia](http://www.internazionale.it/video/2017/05/06/cedric-herrou-migranti-francia-italia)

26 See S. Attia, “Immigration: où en est le ‘délit de solidarité’?”, *Le Monde*, January 6, 2017: [www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2017/01/06/immigration-ou-en-est-le-delit-de-solidarite\\_5058965\\_4355770.html#yXW5QQmzd20HjeJO.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2017/01/06/immigration-ou-en-est-le-delit-de-solidarite_5058965_4355770.html#yXW5QQmzd20HjeJO.99)

27 Council Directive 2002/90/EC of November 28, 2002, “defining the facilitation of unauthorized entry, transit and residence”, art. 1.

28 For Germany, the norm is art. 92a-1 of the 2005 Aliens Act (*Ausländergesetz*); for Spain, art. 54-1-b of the “Ley de Extranjería”. See, Gisti (Groupe d’information et de soutien des immigrés), *Le délit de solidarité dans les législations européennes*, updated to December 31, 2016, [www.gisti.org/spip.php?article5590](http://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article5590)

29 According to Art. 77 of Loi du 15 décembre 1980 “sur l’accès au territoire, le séjour, l’établissement et l’éloignement des étrangers”, modified in 2009. See, Gisti, *Le délit de solidarité dans les législations européennes*, cit.

30 See UE Fundamental Rights Agency, *Criminalisation of migrants in an irregular situation and of persons engaging with them*, Fra-Ue, Bruxelles 2014, [fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/criminalisation-migrants-irregular-situation-and-persons-engaging-them](http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/criminalisation-migrants-irregular-situation-and-persons-engaging-them)

31 For the French situation, see the detailed Gisti dossier: [www.gisti.org/spip.php?article1399](http://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article1399)

32 See S. Attia, “Immigration: où en est le ‘délit de solidarité’?”, cit.

33 Loi du 31 décembre 2012, “relative à la retenue pour vérification du droit au séjour et modifiant le délit d’aide au séjour irrégulier pour en exclure les actions humanitaires et désintéressées”.

entries continue to be punishable by law, including those that aid transit of irregular foreigners within the national territory. Even a simple car ride offered to a refugee can be considered a crime...<sup>34</sup>

## The Italian situation

### *The resurgence of the “crime of solidarity”*

In Italy, as in the rest of Europe, there has been a resurgence of accusations against activists and volunteers in recent years. Unlike in other countries, however, Italian legislation is clear: at least in the case of providing aid to residing irregular foreigners, “abetting” is well distinguished from humanitarian assistance. This has made it more difficult to explicitly criminalize rescue activities, and has “forced” police, prosecutors and mayors to proceed, so to speak, indirectly.

When *no-border* activists in Ventimiglia were denounced in 2015 for abusive employment of public land and unauthorized demonstration<sup>35</sup> is an example. Formally, the indictment wasn’t against aiding and assisting the refugees as such, but the organization of a permanent, “unauthorized” assembly, where volunteers provided information on asylum procedures, as well as legal and medical assistance.<sup>36</sup> Once the assembly was disbanded, the activists were charged and subjected to restrictive measures: many of them were given warrants with a ban on re-entering Ventimiglia due to their alleged “social danger”. These measures were then canceled by the Regional Administrative Court of Liguria.<sup>37</sup> The following year the Mayor, by his own ordinance,<sup>38</sup> banned the distribution of food and drink to migrants by “unauthorized persons”: here too, at least from the formal point

34 Cfr. Collectif Délinquants Solidaires, *Délit de solidarité: comprendre les textes sur lesquels les poursuites sont engagées*, technical datasheet, Paris, February 4, 2017, on the Gisti website: [www.gisti.org/spip.php?article1666](http://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article1666)

35 See “Ventimiglia, fogli di via per chi aiuta i profughi al confine”, *Today*, September 21, 2015: [www.today.it/cronaca/ventimiglia-profughi-attivisti-foglio-di-via.html](http://www.today.it/cronaca/ventimiglia-profughi-attivisti-foglio-di-via.html)

36 For a brief reconstruction of the story, see S. Cilluffo, “I cento giorni di Ventimiglia, tra sgomberi e solidarietà”, in *Today*, September 30, 2015: [www.today.it/cronaca/sgomberi-migranti-ventimiglia-solidarieta.html](http://www.today.it/cronaca/sgomberi-migranti-ventimiglia-solidarieta.html)

37 See P. Barabino, “Ventimiglia, illegittimi i fogli di via a no borders”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, September 23, 2015: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/09/23/ventimiglia-illegittimi-i-fogli-di-via-a-no-borders-la-legale-solidarieta-e-un-diritto-e-un-dovere/3052441/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/09/23/ventimiglia-illegittimi-i-fogli-di-via-a-no-borders-la-legale-solidarieta-e-un-diritto-e-un-dovere/3052441/). The activists were defended in court by the lawyer Alessandra Ballerini.

38 City of Ventimiglia, Ordinance of Mayor no. 129/2016, *Divieto di distribuzione elo somministrazione di alimenti e bevande nelle aree pubbliche da parte di persone non autorizzate*, August 11, 2016: [ventimiglia.trasparenza-valutazione-merito.it/documents/295217763/1266069261/scansione\\_1.pdf/34d881ae-f733-4625-8889-053933e5a3af](http://ventimiglia.trasparenza-valutazione-merito.it/documents/295217763/1266069261/scansione_1.pdf/34d881ae-f733-4625-8889-053933e5a3af)

of view, under accusation was not the provision of aid as such, but the “non-compliance with hygiene and sanitary standards”; the *subterfuge* caused numerous protests, which forced the Mayor to revoke the ordinance.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly in Como, the “warrants” notified in autumn 2016 to *no-borders* activists referred to an “unauthorized demonstration” (against a transport company that transferred migrants to Taranto’s *hotspot* on behalf of the police) and a generic “social danger” of activists.<sup>40</sup> More direct and explicit, however, were the accusations made in Udine against the leaders of the association *Ospiti in Arrivo*.<sup>41</sup> In this case, the alleged offense was of aiding and abetting “for having conducted 30 asylum seekers to Caritas, for having provided them with their cellphone number, for giving guidelines (...) on the procedure for recognition of refugee status”.<sup>42</sup> According to the prosecutor the volunteers would have aimed to, “get an unjust profit equal to at least 5 *per thousand* in case of the recognition of the association”<sup>43</sup> (*sic!*).

The Udine case shows, on the other hand, the effectiveness of the Italian law regarding humanitarian aid: in March 2017, the CPS ordered the filing of the proceedings, since the alleged facts were part of rescue activities protected by Consolidated Law.<sup>44</sup>

### *The second attack on NGOs*

But it is in the spring of 2017 that the most serious case of *criminalization of solidarity* takes place in Italy. By explicitly referring to the allegations launched

39 See veda P. Barabino, “Ventimiglia, revocato il divieto di distribuire cibo ai migranti”, *la Repubblica*, cronaca di Genova, April 23, 2017: [genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/04/23/news/ventimiglia\\_revocato\\_il\\_divieto\\_di\\_distribuire\\_cibo\\_ai\\_migranti-163684319/](http://genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/04/23/news/ventimiglia_revocato_il_divieto_di_distribuire_cibo_ai_migranti-163684319/)

40 See R. Maggioni, “Espulsi da Como perché solidali con i migranti”, *Radio Popolare online*, October 19, 2016: [www.radiopopolare.it/2016/10/espulsi-da-como-perche-solidali-con-i-migranti/](http://www.radiopopolare.it/2016/10/espulsi-da-como-perche-solidali-con-i-migranti/)

41 A. Dazzan, “Migranti, a Udine, indagati 7 volontari”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, June 14, 2016: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/06/14/migranti-procura-udine-indaga-7-volontari-invasione-edifici-favoreggiamento-appello-su-change-arrestateci-tutti/2829993/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/06/14/migranti-procura-udine-indaga-7-volontari-invasione-edifici-favoreggiamento-appello-su-change-arrestateci-tutti/2829993/)

42 See F. Gatti, “Accompagnano i profughi alla Caritas: a Udine tre volontari rischiano il processo”, *L’Espresso*, June 13, 2016: [espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2016/06/13/news/accompagnano-i-profughi-alla-caritas-e-a-udine-tre-volontari-rischiano-il-processo-1.272059](http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2016/06/13/news/accompagnano-i-profughi-alla-caritas-e-a-udine-tre-volontari-rischiano-il-processo-1.272059)

43 This is stated in the preliminary findings of the investigations, reported in F. Gatti, “Accompagnano i profughi alla Caritas: a Udine tre volontari rischiano il processo”, cit.

44 See L. De Francisco, “Inchiesta su Ospiti in Arrivo, tutto archiviato”, *Messaggero Veneto*, cronaca di Udine, 21 February 2017: [messengeroveneto.gelocal.it/udine/cronaca/2017/02/21/news/inchiesta-su-ospiti-in-arrivo-tutto-archiviato-1.14909972](http://messengeroveneto.gelocal.it/udine/cronaca/2017/02/21/news/inchiesta-su-ospiti-in-arrivo-tutto-archiviato-1.14909972); “Archiviato il procedimento sui volontari di Ospiti in Arrivo”, comunicato stampa dal sito di Ospiti in Arrivo, March 17, 2017, [ospitinarriwo.org/4109/archiviato-procedimento-sui-volontari-ospiti-arrivo/](http://ospitinarriwo.org/4109/archiviato-procedimento-sui-volontari-ospiti-arrivo/)

by Frontex,<sup>45</sup> the Prosecutor of Catania, Carmelo Zuccaro, claims that he has opened an investigation into the alleged “collusion” between NGOs and Libyan traffickers.<sup>46</sup> Zuccaro’s statements trigger a wide-ranging political debate and an unprecedented attack on sea rescue activities,<sup>47</sup> but they soon prove unfounded: the prosecutor is forced to acknowledge that he has no evidence supporting his allegations,<sup>48</sup> while Frontex ends up retracting the allegations previously made.<sup>49</sup> The media attack on humanitarian vessels blows over within a few weeks, but leaves a trail of suspicion and apprehension.

There are also doubts regarding the real purpose of the media campaign. During rescue operations, NGOs have been witness to actual boarding maneuvers by the Libyan Coast Guard to migrant vessels. Volunteers have documented, with pictures and videos, episodes of violence by Libyan militia, and denounced serious failures to provide assistance by the European authorities.<sup>50</sup> As Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo writes, the criminalization of NGOs seems to aim at the “elimination of any independent witness in waters where serious international crimes are committed”.<sup>51</sup>

The agreements stipulated with Libya in the hope of “closing taps”, are more important than the protection of human rights ...

45 Cfr. A. Ziniti, “Migranti, sulle Ong Zuccaro insiste: ‘Notizie date da Frontex, non ho nuove prove’”, *la Repubblica*, May 3, 2017: [www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/05/03/news/ong\\_migranti\\_scafisti\\_procura\\_catania\\_zuccaro-164500643/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/05/03/news/ong_migranti_scafisti_procura_catania_zuccaro-164500643/)

46 For a detailed reconstruction of the situation, see A. Romano, C. Torrisi e A. Zitelli, “Ong, migranti, trafficanti, inchieste. Tutto quello che c’è da sapere”, *Valigia Blu*, May 19, 2017: [www.valigiablu.it/ong-migranti-trafficanti-inchieste/](http://www.valigiablu.it/ong-migranti-trafficanti-inchieste/)

47 See A. Romano, C. Torrisi and A. Zitelli, “Ong, migranti, trafficanti, inchieste. Tutto quello che c’è da sapere”, cit.

48 See A. Ziniti, “Migranti, sulle Ong Zuccaro insiste: ‘Notizie date da Frontex, non ho nuove prove’”, cit.

49 See L. Bianchi, “Cosa c’è dietro la caccia alle streghe contro le Ong che salvano i migranti in mare”, in *Vice.com*, quotidiano online, April 28, 2017: [www.vice.com/it/article/yp7epm/accuse-ong-salvataggi-migranti-mediterraneo](http://www.vice.com/it/article/yp7epm/accuse-ong-salvataggi-migranti-mediterraneo); F. Vassallo Paleologo, “Giorni di populismo giudiziario. Cosa si vuole nascondere dietro la criminalizzazione della solidarietà”, on the Adif website, April 29, 2017, [www.a-dif.org/2017/04/29/giorni-di-populismo-giudiziario-cosa-si-vuole-nascondere-dietro-la-criminalizzazione-della-solidarieta/](http://www.a-dif.org/2017/04/29/giorni-di-populismo-giudiziario-cosa-si-vuole-nascondere-dietro-la-criminalizzazione-della-solidarieta/)

50 See D. Padoan, “Perché danno fastidio le Ong che salvano i migranti in mare?”, cit.

51 F. Vassallo Paleologo, “Accordi tra Italia e Libia e respingimenti collettivi in acque internazionali. Cosa si nasconde dietro la criminalizzazione delle Organizzazioni non governative”, on the Adif website, May 14, 2017, [www.a-dif.org/2017/05/14/accordi-tra-italia-e-libia-e-respingimenti-collettivi-in-acque-internazionali-cosa-si-nasconde-dietro-la-criminalizzazione-delle-organizzazioni-non-governative/](http://www.a-dif.org/2017/05/14/accordi-tra-italia-e-libia-e-respingimenti-collettivi-in-acque-internazionali-cosa-si-nasconde-dietro-la-criminalizzazione-delle-organizzazioni-non-governative/)

### Conclusions (provisional)

In the Italian case, the *criminalization of solidarity* has found a quite effective regulatory obstacle: The Consolidated Law clause protecting humanitarian activities seems to have worked, and in the majority of cases the accusations against volunteers and activists have been revoked.

To undermine any *proximity* of citizens with asylum seekers and refugees seems to be a strong temptation of the political system: with the closure of *Mare Nostrum*, with the agreements with Libya and Turkey, and with Frontex increasing interventionism in the management of external borders, this “temptation” today moves powerful actors and interests (including economic ones) not to be underestimated. The ethical, political, and constitutional legitimacy of solidarity today is a conflict of strategic importance: it is not just about migrants, but the state of our democracies and the rule of law.



## Some key words in the resumed and degrading rant on immigrants and asylum seekers

Giuseppe Faso

*To the dear memory of Nicola Solimano*

To return to the discussion on the social construction of the immigrant may seem idle; in the last 25 years the theme has been treated with great acumen by scholars such as Annamaria Rivera and Alessandro Dal Lago; and for years the *Carta di Roma* (Charter of Rome) has been providing us with daily reflections on the behaviour of the media. The first *White Paper* edited by Lunaria, in 2009, addressed the issue from several points of view. In particular, it focused on the stigmatizing and the degrading effects of omissions, renaming and manipulative words (*parole-schermo*), and extended the analysis from the use of vocabulary to reasoning strategies, presuppositions, the position of words in headlines; it was an invitation to pursue the analysis beyond the observation of a vocabulary of a by now *democratic* racism, to deconstruct the mechanisms and effects using pragmatics and textual linguistics.<sup>1</sup>

A request that came from the world of anti-racist activism; while the world of accredited research did not seem to have gone much further in this direction, despite the excellent ideas of Federico Faloppa (on the use of anaphoric encapsulation, for example)<sup>2</sup> and Marcello Maneri on the declination of subjects and objects in customary representation.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, the scripts that have been operating since then have been renewed, the

1 G. Faso, *La lingua del razzismo: alcune parole chiave*, in G. Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, Manifestolibri, Roma 2009, pp. 29-36.

2 F. Faloppa, *Razzisti a parole (per tacer dei fatti)*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2011, pp. 105-107. The anaphoric encapsulator allows to encapsulate with a sign of recovery (this, here, here, etc.), after a pause, what has been said, introducing and taking for granted a judgment. Here is a recurrent example in articles and administrative acts, reported in *Words which exclude*, cited in note 40 below: “in addition to this degradation...”

3 M. Maneri, *I media e la guerra alle migrazioni*, in S. Palidda (edited by), *Razzismo democratico. Le persecuzioni degli stranieri in Europa*, Agenzia X, Milano 2009, pp. 66-85. At pp. 75 of this essay Maneri shows how migrants are presented as active subjects of negative or problematic actions (*they disembark, rob, hijack, invest, push to get in*), or passive subjects of philanthropy acts of our institutions (*admitted to literacy courses, addressees of the multilingual vade-mecum, sea rescue, refuges after disembarkation*) or lastly subject to acts of operations, administrative acts, control policies (*identified, cleared, expelled, liable to arrest*).

narrative has acquired new forms, the dehumanization and degrading of people who come to Europe (or who move within Europe) has found new strategies, not without the reusing of keywords whose cognitive inefficiency or ability to produce damage to democracy seemed to have been abundantly demonstrated.

A simple exercise would be enough. When re-reading headlines and narratives as if 10 years hadn't passed, the alienating effect is glaring.

### Migrants

On the front pages of newspapers, in the headlines of newsletters and newsreels there are (almost) no mentioning of Non-EU citizens or illegals anymore. Now there are “migrants”, which correspond, in common imagination, in articles by journalists and in television programmes of all kinds – but frequently *beforehand* in the speeches of politicians – to these characteristics: they arrive on boats; they live at our expense; they stay in hotels while “our fellow citizens” earthquake-victims are forced to live in tents; they pretend to flee from wars, hunger and conflicts.

The immigrant who has been here for 25, 20, 15 years no longer exists in our imagination; he/she has been replaced by the asylum seeker and pushed into the category of *migrant*. This all-encompassing generalization has become more effectively stigmatizing than the odious *illegal*, attacked frontally by a campaign promoted by *Giornalisti contro il razzismo* (Journalists against racism) in 2008,<sup>4</sup> and perhaps also reinforced by the severe positions of Pope Francis during his visit to Lampedusa: immediately after which the journalists' camp split between those who called the Lampedusa inmates “immigrants” (and, with rapid prevalence, “migrants”) and those who stubbornly, in aggressive tones, kept labelling them “illegals”.<sup>5</sup>

A respectable form of racism prevailed over its more vulgar version; and from 2013 onwards a term used by activist since the early '90s (“immigrants”, insisting on the point of view of those who see them arrive) has persisted in this field<sup>6</sup>, but

4 See [www.giornalismimi.info/mediarom/](http://www.giornalismimi.info/mediarom/)

5 With understated subtlety, in an article in *Redattore Sociale*, Raffaella Cosentino noted that the Pope's visit led to a small miracle, inducing to abandon the term “illegal”: [www.redattore-sociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/441499/Il-papa-va-a-Lampedusa-e-sui-media-i-clandestini-ri-tornano-migranti](http://www.redattore-sociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/441499/Il-papa-va-a-Lampedusa-e-sui-media-i-clandestini-ri-tornano-migranti). I developed a reflection on the topic at [web.giornalismimi.info/mediarom/articoli/art\\_9724.html](http://web.giornalismimi.info/mediarom/articoli/art_9724.html). On the theme, exhaustive Duccio Zola, “Il Papa va a Lampedusa”, in Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Terzo Libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Rome 2014, pp. 140-143, which in footnote 4 on p. 141 documents the hegemonic initiative of Tg1 in favour of “migrants”.

6 Three “voices”: myself, with Giuliano Campioni, entitled “L'Europa, i migranti. Considera-



was definitively caught in its limits with great irony by a writer very sensitive to tics and linguistic stereotypes.<sup>7</sup>

“Migrants” has since become as an empty label, perhaps perceived as a euphemism by polite society; and this generalization allows to insert a photo of an overflowing barge in a press release concerning Italian courses provided by local administrations.<sup>8</sup>

Quite a few of these administrators, when it comes to receiving twenty or so asylum seekers<sup>9</sup>, have tried to argue that they have already done their part – comparing apples to oranges – having three to four thousand long-standing immigrants listed with the registry office, without whom (but this is not said) the economic and demographic fabric of that municipality would have already collapsed.

“Migrant” responds to a strategic choice of those who have just given up “illegal” and are looking for a presentable substitute, and is used therefore as a word of scarce denotativeness and high negative and threatening<sup>10</sup> connotation, used to discard people resident in Italy for thirty years, sometimes now Italian citizens. A word that is insufficient, as already “clandestine” and “caretaker” (badante), vacating of reference, to the synonymic recovery;<sup>11</sup> and it seems to have, contrary to “illegal”, “extracomunitario” (*Non-EU citizen*), “vucumprà” (*street pedlar*), a scarce grip on the common discourse: where lemmas and connotations dating back to a shameful and criminal past are remerging, thanks to the resumption of colonialist degradations.

It is therefore a sign of how active and pervasive the initiatives of newspapers

zioni inattuali a partire dalle circolari di polizia” an intervention released in an insert of “Politica e classe”, 5 (10), March 1992. In 2000, edited by Grazia Naletto, Lunaria published *Voci migranti in Italia, in Francia, in Spagna*; and at that time Sandro Mezzadra, together with others, gave life to the Migrant Table, since active for many years.

7 Paolo Nori, *Mi compro una Gileria*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2008, p. 72.

8 See [www.gonews.it/2017/02/23/stranieri-corsi-gratuiti-lingua-italiana-adulti-certaldo/](http://www.gonews.it/2017/02/23/stranieri-corsi-gratuiti-lingua-italiana-adulti-certaldo/). The image of the boat was soon removed, following a firm position taken by the Agency that manages the courses.

9 I analyzed one example, among many others, in [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ondate-disperati-e-altri-stereotipi-deumanizzanti-e-cosi-che-si-vuol-governare/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ondate-disperati-e-altri-stereotipi-deumanizzanti-e-cosi-che-si-vuol-governare/)

10 In recent years, the most unworthy shams have multiplied over the social, political and health hazards caused by the minimal movements of a population evidently peaceful and healthy. I indicate one of these shams in G. Faso, “L’invasione degli ultracorpi”, [web.giornalismi.info/mediarom/articoli/art\\_9790.html](http://web.giornalismi.info/mediarom/articoli/art_9790.html)

11 On the refractory nature of “clandestine” and “caregiver” to synonymic recovery, otherwise so funny practiced by teachers and newspapers, si veda G. Faso, *La lingua del razzismo: alcune parole chiave*, cit. pp. 31-32.

– whether printed or not – and television talk shows are, as opposed to the imagery-alibi of the mirror (or camera, childishly evoked metaphor to justify indecent choices and perspectives).<sup>12</sup>

So no, “migrant” is not a word (yet) used by all, but for politicians and journalists it has long been a word that does not allow synonyms or explanations.

### Uncensored

The story is known. In the hours following the avalanche of Rigopiano, in Abruzzo, a list of the “missing” was drawn up; but one person – for unknown reasons – escaped the count. This is the despatch from Ansa, at 14.03 on January 23, 2017:

(Ansa) – Turin, January 23rd – The Senegalese immigrant, working at the Hotel Rigopiano, Faye Dame, had recently renewed his residence permit, at the offices of the Police Headquarters in Turin where he resides, when he was swept away by the avalanche. The 42-year-old man had obtained the renewal of his permit by exhibiting his contract of employment with the hotel. Uncensored, according to Police Headquarters he has been working legally in Italy since 2009. The name of Faye Dame was only yesterday included in the list of missing people in the tragedy thanks to the testimony of a couple from Abruzzo, guest of the hotel in the days prior to the avalanche. The presence of the African was then confirmed to the investigators by the hotel’s director, Bruno Di Tommaso.

In a few lines the obligatory catchwords are present: the cloying game of synonyms and hypernyms (Senegalese-man-African),<sup>13</sup> the insistence on renewal of the residence permit, twice revealed in eight lines, and the lack of curiosity about a possibly anomalous case: the absence of the name in the list provided in the first instance by the hotel manager. What is most striking for its inconsistency is the participle, highlighted at the beginning of the final proposition of the first paragraph, and therefore focused: *uncensored*. The news, if there is one, is perhaps to be captured in the delay of information on dispersion, but it is supplanted by a detail that is not provided for any of the other missing, because it is *not relevant*.

This distinctiveness invites the reader to seek a reason for it, investigating

12 On a symptomatic abuse of the metaphor of photography, see G. Faso, “Le dicerie colte di *Repubblica*”, in *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Terzo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, cit., p. 139.

13 The editors, deaf to the sarcastic invective of Paolo Nori (*Diavoli*, Einaudi, Torino 2001, p. 98) continue to neglect the indications explicitly addressed to them by the authoritative Luca Seriani: “the pure recovery is in many cases the preferred solution”. (*Italiani scritti*, il Mulino, Bologna 2007, p. 179).

among possible presuppositions that which explains the cruciality, and the probable pertinence, of the *uncensored*. And it is here that a shrewd and odious device<sup>14</sup> is triggered, one that induces the reader to reconstruct the unspoken, to look for an explanation of the information that is *not relevant*. It is not the reporter, who expressly pronounces the stupidity underlying that *uncensored*; it is the reader who must be ashamed because, in order to understand what is written, the reader has to imagine that something from the few previous lines alludes to the *relevance* of the information regarding “uncensored”: the fact that his name was Dame? That he was 42 years old? That he had regular employment contract? Or that he was Senegalese (or African, hypernym with which it is redefined)?<sup>15</sup> Then again there is no significance in that *uncensored*. This violates one of the nine maxims of Grice’s Cooperative Principle (“Be Relevant”) and induces, before discovering the shell game of the writer, to be suspicious of the person we are talking about: “the uncensored”, on whom apparently nothing bad has been said.<sup>16</sup>

The anomaly of the indication struck and outraged more than one observer: among many, the newsletter of Carta di Roma,<sup>17</sup> from which it bounced on social media and arrived at publications outside the mainstream circuit; from one of which, LiberEtà, we take the reaction of common sense to such *bêtise*:

Under the snow and debris of the hotel there was one more person: the Senegalese Faye Dame, a man, despite having a regular employment contract, nobody had mentioned him. Two tourists remembered him and asked for news. And what was the first information given about this man? *Uncensored, with legal residence permit*. In the case of an Italian (or European) would we have asked for this information?<sup>18</sup>

14 The adjective belongs to a world authority of the studies on the said and the unsaid, Oswald Ducrot, *Presupposizione e allusione*, in *Enciclopedia*, Einaudi, Torino 1980, vol. X, p. 1087.

15 The un-said, the malignant presupposition, the intimidating implicit, the allusion released upon the reader are frequent practice; even if not immediately apparent, their production is within reach of normal linguistic skills (also because they were not learned at school). On the subject, apart from Oswald Ducrot’s enlightening linguistic research (starting with *Dire et ne pas dire. Principes di sémantique linguistique*, Herman, 1998) and Marina Sbisà (*Detto e non detto*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2009), the contribution of two psychologists should also be read: Filippo Domaneschi e Carlo Penco, *Come non detto. Usi e abusi dei sottintesi*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2016.

16 On the role played in communication by relevant research, see Dan Sperber e Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1986.

17 See G. Manzo, [www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/rigopiano-faye-per-la-stampa-lincensurato/](http://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/rigopiano-faye-per-la-stampa-lincensurato/). See also [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/rigopiano-faye-dame-fedina-penale-stampa/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/rigopiano-faye-dame-fedina-penale-stampa/)

18 “L’incensurato dell’Hotel Rigopiano”, unsigned blurb (but perhaps by Silvia Garambois signing the adjacent “Fronte accoglienza”), *LiberEtà*, n. 2, March 2017, p. 39.

The common sense of the writer, clashes with the behavior of reporters and editorial staff in most newspapers. Here is an example of one of these, keen on drawing attention to the issue of immigration; *Avvenire*:

*The Senegalese that no one is looking for: included only yesterday among the missing people*

The Senegalese immigrant, working at the Hotel Rigopiano, Faye Dame, had recently renewed his residence permit, at the offices of the Police Headquarters in Turin where he is resident, when he was overwhelmed by the avalanche. The 42-year-old man had obtained the renewal of his permit by exhibiting his contract of employment with the hotel. Uncensored, according to Police Headquarters he has been working legally in Italy since 2009. The name of Faye Dame was only yesterday included in the list of missing people in the tragedy thanks to the testimony of a couple from Abruzzo, guest of the hotel in the days prior to the avalanche. The presence of the African was then confirmed to the investigators by the hotel’s director, Bruno Di Tommaso.<sup>19</sup>

Here is another example from a newspaper often quoted for its quality, balance and professionalism:

*The missing young Senegalese man was resident in Turin*

The Senegalese immigrant, working at the Hotel Rigopiano, Faye Dame, had recently renewed his residence permit, at the offices of the Police Headquarters in Turin where he is resident, when he was swept away by the avalanche. The 42-year-old man had obtained the renewal of his permit by exhibiting his contract of employment with the hotel. Uncensored, according to Police Headquarters he has been working legally in Italy since 2009. The name of Faye Dame was only yesterday included in the list of missing people in the tragedy thanks to the testimony of a couple from Abruzzo, guest of the hotel in the days prior to the avalanche. The presence of the African was then confirmed to the investigators by the hotel’s director, Bruno Di Tommaso.<sup>20</sup>

As is evident, most of the newspapers, in both their printed and on-line versions, have taken up the news published by Ansa and reproduced the two corroborations on the residence permit and the focus on “uncensored”, without being grazed by suspicion on the sneakiness of such a linguistic move. A journalist from *Repubblica* stands out, although he depends, as is evident, on the dispatch of

19 See [www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/dispersi-salvati-e-deceduti](http://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/dispersi-salvati-e-deceduti)

20 See [www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2017-01-23/rigopiano-giorgia-faye-storie-che-si-trasformano-rinascita-o-tragedia-155916.shtml?uuid=AEdbXuF](http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2017-01-23/rigopiano-giorgia-faye-storie-che-si-trasformano-rinascita-o-tragedia-155916.shtml?uuid=AEdbXuF)

Ansa, but modifies it, obtaining a less vulgar result.

### *The immigrant*

The Senegalese immigrant, working at the Hotel Rigopiano, Faye Dame, had recently renewed his residence permit, at the offices of the Police Headquarters in Turin where he is resident, when he was swept away by the avalanche. The 42-year-old man had obtained the renewal of his permit by exhibiting his contract of employment with the hotel. The name of Faye Dame was only yesterday included in the list of missing people in the tragedy thanks to the testimony of a couple from Abruzzo, guest of the hotel in the days prior to the avalanche. The presence of the man was then confirmed to the investigators by the hotel's director, Bruno Di Tommaso.<sup>21</sup>

Here, too, the repetitive insistence on his administrative condition goes back to the source and repeats its vice: but the insistence on *uncensored* is eliminated and the "African" hyperonym abandoned. This means that a journalist could have taken a positive responsibility and eliminated the pearl: "*uncensored*". And perhaps, with a little extra effort, reduced the insistence on administrative regularity.

### **Perceived**

In the debate that accompanied the Minniti decree on safety, then converted into law (Minniti-Orlando), the notion of "perception", already central in the "Guide to the Package for Safety" of 2007 (Ministry Amato), was restored:

*Measures to ensure the safety of citizens, with particular reference to night hours and areas outside large urban centres*

"There is a perception of a sense of insecurity, especially in metropolitan areas," said Minniti. But, the Minister pointed out, "in 2016 the delinquency decreased by 9.4% compared to the previous year; limited to January 2017, the fall was even more marked, equal to 23.2% compared to January 2016.

I trust that the measure on urban security will be able to increase the tools available to Mayors to prevent the spread of crime in cities".<sup>22</sup>

The declaration was adopted without the blinking of an eye, not even regarding the various strategies<sup>23</sup> which are clearly subject to almost identical declarations.

21 G. Gagliardi, [www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/01/23/news/rigopiano\\_hotel\\_valanga\\_quinto\\_giorno\\_ricerche-156674929/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/01/23/news/rigopiano_hotel_valanga_quinto_giorno_ricerche-156674929/)

22 See the Government official website: [www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/sicurezza-minniti-nel-2016-diminuzione-delittuosita-94-rispetto-2015](http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/sicurezza-minniti-nel-2016-diminuzione-delittuosita-94-rispetto-2015)

23 "Strategy" here, as in the previous paragraph, does not mean intentions or awareness, but the set of procedural mechanisms put in place, subject to the influence, for example, of inertial traditions, automatism, deep motivations.

See for example that of the Chief of Police Gabrielli, of the same days as that of the Minister:

In 2016, we recorded a significant drop in delinquency, down 8.6%, and the first few months of this year confirm this trend. Unfortunately, this is not always matched by an increase in the perception of security by our communities. Communities which are often frightened, worried and lost. It is unquestionable that such a perception, so conflicting with the security detected, above all discounts the interaction of other factors, such as the degradation of many cities and the feeling of precariousness that a long economic crisis of over 10 years has progressively increased.<sup>24</sup>

The contexts are different, and the juxtaposition between the two considerations, beyond the first impression of similarity in positions, leads to different reasoning paths: in the Minister's speech, "there is the perception... but the delinquency has diminished"; in that of the Chief of Police, there is "a significant decrease in delinquency", to which "unfortunately does not correspond an increase in the perception of security". Speaking to the Police, Prefect Gabrielli rightly reverses what the Minister worriedly affirms. For him, it is not a question of the perception of insecurity, but of a failure to increase the perception of security, which should derive from the good work of law enforcement agencies. There is a tactical oscillation between negative perception and lack of a positive perception.

It is well known that the perception of insecurity is a concrete social phenomenon, capable, above all, of producing effects; and we know that it should be evaluated seriously, introducing into the analysis factors less uncertain than those that occur in the common sense (and to which Gabrielli indulges here): the degradation<sup>25</sup> of cities, the feeling of precariousness. Perceptions that refer, as in their basics, to sensations, but that requires a refined analysis.

Ministry Amato's document from 2007 did not show any analytical refinement at all, when it stated: "To further exacerbate the perception of insecurity of citizens there is the conviction, *not unfounded*, of an inadequate guarantee of certainty of punishment". Note the love of bureaucratic language for understatement, and the ambiguity that they often permit: "not unfounded" is not like saying "founded", a statement of which it would be difficult to take responsibility: one

24 See [www.anfp.it/discorso-franco-gabrielli-alla-festa-della-polizia/](http://www.anfp.it/discorso-franco-gabrielli-alla-festa-della-polizia/)

25 On the social construction of degradation, see Marcello Maneri's timely analysis, "Il panico morale come dispositivo di trasformazione dell'insicurezza", in *Rassegna italiana di sociologia*, 42 (1), 2001, pp. 5-40; and the subsequent, precious development of the same scholar, "Si fa presto a dire di sicurezza", in *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa* 2, 2013, pp. 299-300.

simply opposes a person who has the common sense of reiterating the lack of logical foundation of a feeling of fear. It is not incongruous to repeat what I observed in November 2007:

The conviction defined as “not unfounded” is clearly based on socially built foundations, rumours (bar talk twenty years ago but today also voiced by “democratic” politicians) on the “privileges” of Roma and immigrants who, on the contrary, according to serious studies on the subject, are the only ones to pay, beyond measure, for the crimes committed (and sometimes presumed), as shown, on a specific but significant sample of cases, in a document from the Michelucci Foundation published in *Guerra&Pace*, December 2007. See the case of the “Albanian pirate” and the “Roma murderer”, sentenced for culpable murders to much more severe sentences than any other “street pirate”.<sup>26</sup>

The “perception of insecurity” (which is almost a theological whim, like saying “perception of a perception”) has little to do with the concrete reasons for being insecure. Moreover, the Chief of Police says, that in this situation of a significant drop in crimes (we are at a historical minimum since the Unification of Italy) the perception of security could adapt to the reassuring ISTAT data.

For this reason, strengthening security is one thing, combating perception requires other strategies, which are certainly not practiced by those who evoke perception<sup>27</sup> with great superficiality to justify policies that exploit widespread fears thanks to recurring panic campaigns, capable of channelling complex social concerns.

In this way, with the Minniti-Orlando Law, we return to a path already pointed out with great acumen by David Garland: the control of crime will not be able, with this approach, to face this complex issue in the long term, but will prefer to

26 Ivi, pp. 102-103.

27 The perception of which the Minister speaks is questionable: it is rather about the representation (of Minniti) of the sense of insecurity (of the population); that according to recent Istat reports (such as that of December 7, 2016) is not increasing at all: “The perception of security is substantially stable, compared to 2009, while the other subjective indicators are improving in 2016. There is less concern for oneself or others in one’s family about sexual violence and less frequent signs of social degradation in the area where one lives. In addition, some forms of sexual violence suffered by women are also decreasing.. Also on the front of population perceptions there is an overall positive situation, there is less concern for sexual violence, a lower level of degradation and a substantial stability of the people who feel safe”. ([www.istat.it/it/files/2016/12/07-Sicurezza-BES-2016.pdf](http://www.istat.it/it/files/2016/12/07-Sicurezza-BES-2016.pdf)). Commenting on similar Istat data on the stability of the perception of insecurity in the years 1997-2011, Adolfo Ceretti and Roberto Cornelli consider them “truly surprising if one considers the invasion of the fear of crime in public discourse” of the last twenty years. (*Oltre la paura*, Feltrinelli 2013, p. 25).

follow immediate gratifications, staging for a fearful citizenship random measures, which give the illusion that the escalation of crime is being fought. Anyhow, it is not true that crime is spreading; on the contrary, it is in sharp decline: it is sufficient to move on to a less panic-driven<sup>28</sup> representation. The protagonists of this new season, which has as its main result irreversible damage to inclusive democracy,<sup>29</sup> are the Mayors, competing on who invented the more unconstitutional ordinance; in the end, it all stopped thanks to the Constitutional Court.<sup>30</sup>

If we would want not to use perception for policies of control and fear, but try to reduce the reasons for it, perhaps we could begin to wonder whether – as common sense and serious research suggests – there is a relationship between the *representation* of the phenomena and the *perception* of it.<sup>31</sup> We are not talking here about a mirror relationship (the media and public discourse that reflect common feelings), but about real and prolonged campaigns of emphasis, stigmatization, dehumanization. What is totally lacking in the speeches of the Chief of Police, the Minister, and many subjects in different degrees attracted by the entrepreneurship of fear and racism, is a reflection on the political and media representation of immigration (and the Roma). And it is this act of denial that, as Freud taught, needs to be scrutinized.

### Values

On May 15,<sup>32</sup> when commenting on the case of a Sikh citizen guilty of circulating with an 18 centimeters long knife, considered by him to be a religious

28 See D. Garland, *The Culture of Control. Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2001.

29 See A. Ceretti e R. Cornelli, *Oltre la paura*, cit., p. 15.

30 S. Bontempelli, “Ordinanza pazzo. I Sindaci e il versante grottesco del razzismo”, in G. Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, cit., pp. 113-122. In Law no. 125 of 2008, on “Urgent measures in the field of public safety”, the Constitutional Court found traits illegality in relation to the special powers of the Mayors. Nazzarena Zorzella had provided a severe and precious analysis, “I nuovi poteri dei sindaci nel “pacchetto sicurezza” e la loro ricaduta sugli stranieri”, in *Diritto, immigrazione e cittadinanza*, n. 3-4, 2008, pp. 57-73. See also A. Guazzarotti, *La Corte costituzionale pone fine alle ordinanze dei Sindaci sulla sicurezza urbana: un rigore foriero di futuri sviluppi?*, in “*Diritto, immigrazione e cittadinanza*”, n. 2, 2011, pp. 91-104.

31 Perception “naturalizes the result of a definition that many have put in hand and allows us to escape the empirical counter-evidence of the decline or lack of increase in crimes, as Maneri notes, *Si fa presto a dire sicurezza*, cit. p. 283; the same scholar on p. 287 reminds us that “social problems should be considered primarily as the product of collective definitions, as conditions or successions labeled with success, as problems in the public arena.

32 The sentence can be downloaded here: [www.giurisprudenzapenale.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/cass-pen-24084-2017.pdf](http://www.giurisprudenzapenale.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/cass-pen-24084-2017.pdf)



symbol, the Court of Cassation brought into question nothing less than the “reference values” of the host society. A call for compliance with written laws would have been enough. The Court did not say, as several newspapers have reported, quoting as if they were literally reporting the words of the Court, that “immigrants must comply with our values”,<sup>33</sup> but all the same the statement causes some concern:

the coexistence of different ethnic groups necessarily requires the identification of a common core that both immigrants and host societies must recognize. Even though integration does not require the abandonment of the culture of origin, in accordance with the provisions of art. 2 which values social pluralism, respect for human rights and the legal civilization of the host society is an insurmountable limit. It is therefore an essential obligation for the immigrant to conform his or her values to those of the Western world, in which he or she has freely chosen to enter, and to verify in advance the compatibility of his or her behavior with the principles that regulate it and therefore the lawfulness of them in relation to the legal system that controls it. The decision to establish oneself in a society in which it is known, and one is aware, that the reference values are different from the one of origin imposes respect for them and it is not tolerable that attachment to one's own values, even if lawful according to the laws in force in the country of origin, leads to conscious violation of those of the host society.

Not only then should immigrants conform to the values of a “we” which belong to people with whom, for them, it is better not to have anything to do with;<sup>34</sup> but also a reference to the dictates of the laws, recklessly and generously traced back to legal culture and its presumed “values” that should be called into question. As Alberto Guariso of the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration, interviewed by *Corriere della Sera*, pointed out: “The European Convention on Human Rights establishes that limits can be placed on the freedom of expression of thought if they are necessary to protect public order and therefore security”. For this reason, “the passage on the need to take into account the dominant values of our society” was pointless.

33 See [www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/cassazione-i-migranti-si-conformino-ai-nostri-valori-anche-1397464.html](http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/cassazione-i-migranti-si-conformino-ai-nostri-valori-anche-1397464.html)

34 P. Lami, “Immigrati è finita la pacchia. La Cassazione: ‘Devono uniformarsi ai nostri valori’”, [www.secoloditalia.it/2017/05/immigrati-finita-la-pacchia-la-cassazione-devono-uniformarsi-ai-nostri-valori/](http://www.secoloditalia.it/2017/05/immigrati-finita-la-pacchia-la-cassazione-devono-uniformarsi-ai-nostri-valori/)

Here the adequate and immediate commentary by *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*:

The role of the Court of Cassation should be to verify whether in this instance the court that issued the appealed decision has correctly applied the law. In this case, whether the ban to carry what could become a weapon has been respected. With this ruling, however, the Court seems to go beyond its mandate and instead refers to the “obligation to respect the values of the host society”. A perilous reminder, issued on the same day that the police arrested those responsible of Cara di Isola Capo Rizzuto, following the investigation that revealed “a lucrative business controlled by the mafia with the backing of local notables, including members of the Church”, as recalled yesterday by Chiara Saraceno in *la Repubblica*. Coincidence requires us to reflect on what “the values of the Western world” would be, and how will, the people who are victims of these businesses – that is, migrants – “learn our values, if the first to deny the basic values of respect for the dignity of others and human rights are those to whom the state entrusts them, even against their will”?

A question launched by Saraceno, who invites us to “really focus on the values that distinguish us as civil and democratic subjects, respect for the other and his dignity as a human being”.<sup>35</sup>

In this case, too, it is worth noting the re-use of an improper scheme, already tried and tested and not questioned by easily satisfied democrats. When the then Minister Amato (who brings more than one thread of our reconstruction) proposed a Charter of Values to be imposed on immigrants (with particular attention to those of Muslim faith), its deleterious and extended effect on the debate (as can be seen today) were immediately denounced by Annamaria Rivera in *Guerre&pace* in October 2007,<sup>36</sup> indicating the sign of prejudices and commonplaces. Rivera's remarks were not only pertinent and acute, but also courageous, given that the Charter passed without any reaction from the cultured “anti-racists” and met with squeaks of approval by democratic intellectuals of hasty and prejudiced attention.<sup>37</sup>

35 See [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/corte-cassazione-sentenza-sikh/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/corte-cassazione-sentenza-sikh/)

36 A. Rivera, *Le carte del razzismo rispettabile*, in Id., *Regole e roghi. Metamorfosi del razzismo*, Dedalo, Bari 2009, pp. 211-215.

37 G. Faso, *Valori*, in Id., *Lessico del razzismo democratico. Le parole che escludono*, DeriveApprodi, Roma 2008, pp. 153-155.



## Easy/difficult

Today it is hard not to notice the laughable side (and yesterday we had already pointed out the grotesque side) in the relationship between the values of which Minister Amato spoke yesterday, those of which the Court of Cassation speaks today and the function and tasks of the media. Here is what is stated in the Charter:

14. On the basis of the same values, it is also up to the media to promote knowledge of immigration, its cultural and religious components, and to combat prejudice and xenophobia. Their role is essential to spread a cultural pluralism respectful of the traditions and basic values of Italian society.<sup>38</sup>

That is not the case. It does not seem that media is fighting prejudice and xenophobia. There are those who feed them in abundance, and then there are those who recognise them without analysing their genealogy to implement an effective response. There are processes of conceptual, ethical and linguistic impoverishment. Those who want to show off their knowledge of the use of the subjunctive but surrenders to the banality of public discourse, and endorses the use of “badante” (caretaker), “extracomunitario” (non-EU citizen) (perhaps for a Romanian), *zingaro* (gipsy). There are many signs of degradation of responsibilities, including linguistic ones, of the cultured. This perhaps does not touch on the habits of the most fanatical racism, but it pollutes the most elementary tools of analysis and reflection on social phenomena.

One hears the use of the word “scrapping”: a metaphor that has benefited those who used it as a weapon, and brought them luck in front of an audience unable to distinguish, compare and deduce. Now the term “scrapping” is used in the administrative language, with regard to tax collector’s files;<sup>39</sup> what until yesterday would have been called amnesty or regularization, today passes under a term with a strong connotation, reinforced by the use that has been made of it in politics. Hence compromising the obligations of stringency and precision that should characterize the legal and administrative texts.<sup>40</sup> Something similar seems

38 But today the whole Charter must be read again, to make history of the path that has led us to such a paradox: [www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/13/ Carta\\_dei\\_Valorix\\_della\\_Cittadinanza\\_e\\_dellxIntegrazione.pdf](http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/13/Carta_dei_Valorix_della_Cittadinanza_e_dellxIntegrazione.pdf)

39 See [www.leggioggi.it/2016/11/23/rottamazione-cartelle-esattoriali-ecco-cosa-cambia-punto-per-punto/](http://www.leggioggi.it/2016/11/23/rottamazione-cartelle-esattoriali-ecco-cosa-cambia-punto-per-punto/)

40 See a research on 1,346 European administrative acts on Roma, coordinated with the usual rigour and rare sensitivity of the late Nicola Solimano, and summarised in *Words which exclude*, edited by the Centre Creas of the University of Verona and the Giovanni Michelucci Foundation, Fiesole 2014.

to happen with “perceived”, which, more and more often used in talk shows, lately has been taken up by meteorological websites to indicate something else, which could perhaps be called “heat index”. One these websites one can read, next to alarms about incoming disturbances, increasingly announced as catastrophes and with rebellious and aggressive names, that there is a temperature, and then a perceived temperature, expressed in degrees centigrade: as if it were measured, and not the result of a combination of parameters.<sup>41</sup>

Public discourse in qualified places is increasingly neglected, approximate and negligent of Calvino’s acute warning, a few decades ago: the devil is the approximate.<sup>42</sup> And yet another extremely fallacious conviction is emerging, one that is pronounced without any argument-related commitment. We speak this way because it is *easy* and understandable. According to this creed, it is *easy* to say *badante* (caretaker), to call the language courses for immigrants and their children *literacy* courses, to declare their linguistic competence at *level zero* (on the contrary very high as opposed to that of those voicing such baloney).

It is *easy* to say *extracomunitario* (non-EU citizen), *illegal* and *negro*. *Easy*, and closer to the natural. Artificial to call someone from abroad a lady (*una signora*): better, and immediately understandable, *Filipino*, *Nigerian*, *Ukrainian*: or maybe *Guatemalan kitchen maid*.<sup>43</sup> As it seemed natural a few decades ago, to say: my *handmaid*, or: *jezebel*.

That is not the case. To arrive at practices of such cruel inferiorization, and at the removal of human characters, of the other that comes to us, an enormous work has been carried out, which is now erased and presented as “nature” when it is indeed the result, and as naturalness what, on the contrary, is acquiescence, complicity, surrender. And not of human nature, but of the single individual that has surrendered, for cowardice, interest, perverted sense of self. It must be acknowledged, and it is best to say it loudly: it has been difficult to build these

41 On this unpleasant habit see: [www.centrometeo.com/articoli-reportage-approfondimenti/angolo-sottocorona/4648-temperatura-percepita-non-esiste](http://www.centrometeo.com/articoli-reportage-approfondimenti/angolo-sottocorona/4648-temperatura-percepita-non-esiste)

42 “The devil today is the approximate. By devil I mean negativity without redemption, from which no good can come. In the approximate speeches, in the genericities, in the imprecision of thought and language, especially if accompanied by sicumera and petulance, we can recognize the devil as the enemy of clarity, both interior and in relations with others, the devil as the personification of mystification and self-mystification.” (Italo Calvino, *Risposta a un’inchiesta della “Domenica del Corriere” sul diavolo oggi*, February 1978. And in *Una pietra sopra*, Einaudi, Torino 1980, p. 307. Also in Id., *Opera omnia*, Meridiani Mondadori, Saggi, Tomo I, Milano 1995, p. 377).

43 A reading of this little comic masterpiece is in [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/sguattere-e-ministre/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/sguattere-e-ministre/)

dehumanizing devices, which reveal how advanced the inhumanity of those who has set them in motion, and of those who embrace them, is.

For this reason:

*Find it surprising though not unusual  
Inexplicable though normal  
Incomprehensible though it is the rule.  
Consider even the most insignificant, seemingly simple  
Action with distrust. Ask yourselves whether it is necessary  
Especially if it is usual.  
We ask you expressly to discover  
That what happens all the time is not natural.  
For to say that something is natural  
In such times of bloody confusion  
Of ordained disorder, of systematic arbitrariness  
Of inhuman humanity is to  
Regard it as unchangeable<sup>44</sup>*

44 Bertolt Brecht, *The Exception and the Rule*, 1930, translated by Ralph Manhelm.

## Out of control. When social media cross the “wall” of racism

Paola Andrisani

We have reached a point of no return. Nowadays, the stigmatizing and racist discourse is capable polluting and contaminating even “spaces” that had been traditionally immune from it. And that disconcerting ordinariness which, in recent years,<sup>1</sup> we have found in the most violent racist practices, has literally poisoned the common language as well. The result is that, also thanks to the web, discourses that would normally have been delegitimised, precisely because they are racist, are trivialised and tend to turn into common sense.

The very small number of cases documented in our database should not be misleading. The main problem – our own as well as the media’s and the various realities that carry out monitoring activities – is precisely that of systematic and widespread monitoring and contextual reporting of countless posts placed on-line. While, on the one hand, with regard to hate speech in the press, there are numerous cases of malicious violation of the Rome Statute, on the other hand, there is growing awareness of how widespread and pervasive racist discourse on the web is and how difficult it is to combat it.

Certainly, until today, social media administrators have not shown themselves to be particularly cooperative: even when they receive reports of obviously xenophobic and racist content, only in some cases do they carry out its removal and in any case not promptly. On the other hand, the call for the need to balance the right to non-discrimination with the right to freedom of expression is often used as an excuse not to activate alarm systems or automatic identification of discriminatory content. Until now, social media administrators have developed sophisticated algorithms to profile the identity, preferences and tastes of users (in their role as consumers), selecting (and controlling) the type of messages visible on the home-pages of personal profiles. On the other hand, they do not seem to be interested or willing to make a similar investment in order to effectively combat the spread of online violence.<sup>2</sup>

1 Andrisani P., (2014), “The perverse intermingling of virtual and ‘viral’ hatred”, in: Lunaria (ed.), *Chronicles of Ordinary Racism. Third White Paper on Racism in Italy*, pp. 97-102.

2 In February 2017, Laura Boldrini, President of the Chamber, at the inauguration of the two-day event on “Parole O\_stili” in Trieste, declared: “Facebook, together with the other giants on the Net, has signed a code of conduct against” the spread of the illegal incitement to

In fact, the operation of disallowance of the racist nature of posts, photos and comments made on the net, happens on a double track that feeds itself: on the one hand, there is the work of the media that, in most cases, rarely take a clear position and denounce racism hidden behind these posts; on the other hand, there are common users who increasingly tend to be involved in what we have defined as a “viral contagion”.<sup>3</sup> Only in 2014, Unar<sup>4</sup> had recorded 347 cases of racist expressions in social media, of which 185 on Facebook and 185 on Twitter and Youtube. To these were added 326 other cases in the links that relaunched them. In total, almost 700 episodes of intolerance. A significant number but certainly underestimated.

The increase in public expressions of incitement to violence and racist discourses combine with the proliferation of false news by fuelling “anti-migrant” rhetoric and transforming complex problems into intolerant slogans polarizing the online debate: “we against them”.<sup>5</sup> This sharp contrast often also inspires concrete racist behaviour, as can be seen, for example, from the increase in physical attacks by individuals or “groups of vigilantes” against refugees, asylum seekers and/or migrants. Removing the hellish machine that produces and reproduces aggressive speeches out of control and implementing effective removal and “deconstruction” tools, through alternative and independent narratives, has therefore become a priority.

### When to curb is not enough. The laborious “removal” path

Between 2015 and 2017, some initiatives were taken to try to curb the spread of online racism.

In March 2015, the Council of Ministers, on the proposal of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paolo Gentiloni, approved a Draft Law to ratify and implement the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime.<sup>6</sup>

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hatred in Europe “... The first six-monthly review says that only 28% of the reported discriminatory or racist content is deleted. An average that is obtained from 50% of Germany and France and from the miserable 4% Italian. Maybe all this happens also because Facebook, despite its 28 million users in Italy, has not yet opened an operational office in our country.”

3 Andrisani P., (2015), “Dal contagio “virale” al web-marketing dell’odio razzista”, in: IDOS (ed), *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2015*, pp. 250- 252.

4 “Immigranti, l’incitazione all’odio è online: 700 episodi di razzismo sui social nel 2014”, *Redattore Sociale*, April 24, 2015, available in: [www.redattore sociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/482471/Immigrati-l-incitazione-all-odio-e-on-line-700-episodi-di-razzismo-sui-social-nel-2014](http://www.redattore sociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/482471/Immigrati-l-incitazione-all-odio-e-on-line-700-episodi-di-razzismo-sui-social-nel-2014).

5 In this regard, see also: ENAR, *Racism and discrimination in the context of migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-16*, [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org).

6 The “Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, relating to the criminalisation

The text, adopted in Strasbourg on January 28, 2003, provides for the possibility of sanctioning acts of racism and xenophobia committed by computer systems. Signed on November 9, 2011, by Italy, it has never been ratified. The draft Law approved at Palazzo Chigi and then by the Chamber,<sup>7</sup> is still in the Senate that has not yet begun its examination.<sup>8</sup>

2015 was also characterized by the first positions taken by some newspapers (active also on social media) on the correct management of online activism by users.

In April 2015, the daily newspaper *L’Unione Sarda* communicates to its readers on its Facebook page the impossibility of providing updates about the devastating massacre<sup>9</sup> that occurred off the coast of Sicily, because “a moment of mourning has been transformed by some disgraceful spirit into a senseless expression of hatred”.<sup>10</sup> The next day also the website *Giornalettismo* bans many comments and the editors of *Il Tirreno* and *La Nuova Sardegna* block online comments. And again, on August 9, 2015, the social media team of *La Stampa* intervenes on the Facebook page of the newspaper to put a stop to racist comments generated by a news item<sup>11</sup> that speaks of little Nicole, a Romani whose intellectual quotient is higher than that of Einstein.

In Europe, meanwhile, the German government has announced that Facebook,

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of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed by means of computer systems. STCE n°: 189”, [conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?CL=ITA&NT&NT=189](http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?CL=ITA&NT&NT=189), in addition to defining what constitutes racist and xenophobic material, it also identifies the conduct liable to incrimination. These include: “dissemination of racist and xenophobic material through computer systems, threats with racist and xenophobic motivation, insult with racist and xenophobic motivation, denial, blatant minimisation, approval or justification of genocide or crimes against humanity, aid and complicity”.

7 Chamber Act No. 3084, XVII Legislature, “Ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of racism and xenophobia committed by means of computer systems, done at Strasbourg on 28 January 2003”, adopted on July 6, 2016.

8 Senate Act no. 2471, XVII Legislature, “Ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of racism and xenophobia committed by means of computer systems, done at Strasbourg on 28 January 2003”, assigned on July 12, 2016, to the JHA and Foreign Affairs Joint Commissions, but the examination has not yet begun.

9 The racist violence on the net did not stop either in front of one of the greatest massacres in the Mediterranean caused by the shipwreck of an Eritrean boat used for the transport of migrants on the night of April 18, 2015 off the coast of Libya. The shipwreck resulted in 58 established fatalities, 28 survivors saved and between 700 and 900 presumed missing persons.

10 Andrisani P., (2015), *ibidem*.

11 A few days earlier, the German broadcaster ARD appealed to listeners asking them to oppose, speak out and “shame” hate instigators..

Google and Twitter have agreed to remove racist speeches from their platforms in 24 hours (December 2015). Zuckerberg places migrants among the categories to be defended from hate speech (March 2016). The Ethical Journalism Network disseminates an appeal on the “Ethical Values Essential to Countercensorship and Hate” (April 2016).<sup>12</sup>

In May 2016, the European Commission agreed on a code of conduct with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft, with the aim of making the fight against hate speech on-line more effective.<sup>13</sup> The time taken to verify reports is not always adequate: hate messages remain on-line for a long time, despite the fact that they conflict with the policies subscribed to by the social networks themselves. However, it is also the results of the reports that make the situation critical that do not always involve the removal of the offensive contents monitored. By signing the code of conduct, IT companies are therefore publicly committed to curbing the dissemination of messages of incitement to hatred and violence on social networks. The adoption of clear and effective procedures for examining reports, the creation of specialized teams and the identification of national contact points, the examination within 24 hours of the reported contents and their prompt removal, the promotion of initiatives to educate and raise awareness of users, the carrying out of training activities for their staff and aimed at civil society are some of the main commitments undertaken.<sup>14</sup>

12 “Humanity, accuracy and transparency”: these are the key elements of journalistic ethics for the Ethical Journalism Network, which can and must represent the standard of responsible public communication, capable of counteracting hate speech and propaganda. The press release is available here: [ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/world-press-freedom-day-3-may-2016-journalism-must-take-a-lead-in-countering-hate-speech-and-propaganda](http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/world-press-freedom-day-3-may-2016-journalism-must-take-a-lead-in-countering-hate-speech-and-propaganda).

13 See, European Commission, *Code of conduct to countering illegal hatespeech online*, 2016, available here: [ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/hate\\_speech\\_code\\_of\\_conduct\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/hate_speech_code_of_conduct_en.pdf)

14 The Commission itself, a few months later, has decided to carry out monitoring to verify the effective application of the code, entrusting the task to 12 organisations in 9 European countries, including, for Italy, the National Office against Racial Discrimination. Out of 600 reports made in 6 weeks, only 169 were removed (28.2%). The target group for the aggressive messages monitored was the Jewish community in 23.7% of reports. Discriminatory speeches on the basis of nationality (21%) and those against people of Muslim faith (20.2%) follow. Reports related to content published mainly on Facebook (45% of cases, i. e. 270 reports), followed by Twitter (27%, 163 content), YouTube (21%, 123 content) and other platforms (7%). The ranking changes if you look at the number of contents reported and removed: to have removed the most content is YouTube, in 48.5% of cases; then follow Facebook (the removal affected 28.3% of cases) and finally Twitter (19.1%). Italy recorded the lowest number of content removed: only 3.6% (out of 110 reports). Only 40% of the reported content was analysed and removed within 24 hours. To raise the average time taken, in this case, Twitter: if Facebook has worked 50% of the reports within the time indicated by the code and YouTube

On May 10, 2016, the Presidency of the Chamber established a Commission on intolerance, xenophobia, racism and hate phenomena (*Commissione sull'intolleranza, la xenofobia, il razzismo e i fenomeni di odio*),<sup>15</sup> with the task of carrying out studies and research on these issues, also through hearings.<sup>16</sup> The Commission, chaired by the President of the Chamber, worked in a “mixed” composition, including one member from each parliamentary group, representatives of supranational organizations, research institutes, associations<sup>17</sup> and the presence of experts.

The Commission was born as a result of the initiative promoted by the Council of Europe, which brought together in an “Alliance against hatred” MEPs from 47 countries, attributing to the Hon. Santerini (Democracy Solidarity – Democratic Centre) the mandate of Rapporteur General on Racism and Intolerance, with the task of coordinating the work of the network of parliamentarians. On July 20, 2017, the Cox Commission presented its *final report*<sup>18</sup> to the press which, in addition to a detailed analysis of sexism, homophobia, racism and antiziganism carried through the network, proposes, in 56 recommendations, a genuine agenda for combating on-line violence. In addition to advocating the adoption of a legal definition of so-called “hate speech”, the Commission recommends an improvement and greater coordination of the available official data systems on verbal violence and racist crimes, the recognition of sexism as a discriminatory motive, the swift approval of the citizenship reform, the introduction of criminal sanctions against aggressive discriminatory discourse, more stringent regulation of the functioning of online platforms and social networks to allow for the rapid monitoring and removal of discriminatory content. On the political and institutional level, it recognizes the importance of launching structural policies for the social integration of migrants and asylum seekers, also supporting the protection activities of civil society organizations. It stresses the role of

60.8%, Twitter stops at 23.5%. UNAR ([www.unar.it](http://www.unar.it)) data reported by *Carta di Roma*: [www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/hatespeech-test-autoregolamentazione/](http://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/hatespeech-test-autoregolamentazione/).

15 At its meeting on July 4, 2016, the Commission decided to include in its name the reference to Jo Cox, a Member of the UK House of Commons and known for her commitment to human rights, killed on June 16, 2016, while she was preparing to attend a meeting with voters on the eve of the Brexit referendum, to the cry of “Britain first”.

16 Online you can read and download the stenographic reports of the sittings: [www.camera.it/leg17/1267](http://www.camera.it/leg17/1267).

17 Lunaria is one of the civil society organisations that have been part of the Commission together with Amnesty International, Arci, Carta di Roma, Cospe, Fidr, Human Rights Watch and associazione 21luglio.

18 See: House of Deputies, XII Legislature, Jo Cox Committee on hate, intolerance, xenophobia and racism, *Final Report*, July 20, 2017, available here: [www.camera.it/leg17/1313](http://www.camera.it/leg17/1313).



prevention and condemnation that institutional and political actors should play against all forms of racism. Awareness campaigns against bullying, cyber-bullying and racism in the school world as well as information campaigns on civil rights, anti-discrimination and different religious traditions are also called for.

Traditional and on-line media are called upon to respect professional ethics, avoiding stereotypes and stigmatization; the Professional Association and the Union of Journalists are invited to invest in the training and proper contractualization of media operators.

Still in 2016, some legislative proposals were presented.

The proposal submitted to the Chamber by Beni and others<sup>19</sup> provides for an extension of punishable hate speech: in addition to making explicit reference to cases where discriminatory content is conveyed through the internet, the proposal also recognizes as discriminatory crimes motivated by the sexual orientation, gender or disability of victims. As can be read in the explanatory memorandum to the text, the objective is to combat “morally censurable conduct that is harmful to the dignity of people, as well as dangerous for security and civil coexistence, without in any way restricting the right to the free expression of thought enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution, as well as freedom of expression on the web. At the same time, the law provides for measures aimed at preventing hate speech, through training and education in respect for differences, social responsibility and the conscious use of new telematic communication tools”.<sup>20</sup>

The Bill of Law presented to the Senate by Senators Battista, Orellana and Panizza,<sup>21</sup> instead aims to make the system of social platforms transparent and to provide a guarantee for access to information through a responsible use of virtual confrontation and an appropriate regulation that allows the traceability

19 XVII Legislature, Chamber of Deputies No. 4077, Proposed Law of initiative by Deputies: Beni, Roberta Agostini, Albini, Amato, Basso, Camani, Campana, Carloni, Carocci, Chaouki, Cominelli, Cuperlo, Dallai, Ghizzoni, Giacobbe, Gneccchi, Gribaudo, Giuseppe Guerini, Incerti, Iori, La Marca, Laforgia, Lodolini, Patrizia Maestri, Miotto, Narduolo, Parrini, Patriarca, Piazzoni, Ragosta, Rampi, Rubinato, Zanin, Zoggia, “Amendments to Law no. 654 of October 13, 1975, to Decree Law no. 122 of April 26, 1993, converted, with amendments, by Law no. 205 of June 25, 1993, and other provisions concerning the combating of incitement to hatred and discrimination (hate speech)”, [www.camera.it/\\_dati/leg17/lavori/schedela/apriTelecomando\\_wai.asp?codice=17PDL0046090](http://www.camera.it/_dati/leg17/lavori/schedela/apriTelecomando_wai.asp?codice=17PDL0046090)

20 From the text of the explanatory memorandum to the legislative proposal.

21 XVII Legislature, no. 2575, Draft Law of initiative of Senators Battista, Orellana and Panizza, Communicated to the Presidency on October 21, 2016, “Delegation to the Government to ensure the achievement of the traceability of the identity of authors of content in social network platforms”: [www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/17/DDLPRES/994380/index.html#](http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/17/DDLPRES/994380/index.html#).

of the user-author’s activity. On the other hand, the draft Law presented by Senator Gambaro and others on February 7, 2017 focuses on the so-called *bufale* online fakenews<sup>22</sup> (fake news).<sup>23</sup> The proposed rules are intended to ensure the transparency of information, provide for fines for those who publish false news and imprisonment for those who promote hatred campaigns or those aimed at undermining the democratic process. A long the same lines is the *#BastaBufale*<sup>24</sup> appeal, promoted by the President of the Chamber, Laura Boldrini, to bring to the attention of public opinion the pollution of information produced by fake news and the publication by Facebook (April 2017) of a guide on false news in 13 countries, including Italy. A real decalogue, written in collaboration with the Fondazione Mondo Digitale, provides some useful tips to recognize false news (do not trust the titles, look well at the url, do research on the source to ensure its reliability, etc.).

### Profiles and arguments of the new haters on social media

However, the above-mentioned initiatives are clearly not sufficient: hate and violence on the Internet continue to open up new spaces, take new forms and consequently involve an increasing number of users. In addition to the large number of private citizens, young and not only, that regularly visits social networks, it is the institutional and political figures<sup>25</sup> that spread, mostly without

22 Behind the fake news market, in addition to a physiological misinformation – among the oldest weapon in the world – there is above all a real market, a new business model already renamed “fakenews-onomics”, which revolves around less intellectual rigour on part of citizens-readers-voters and the fact that information is “a phenomenon of contagion”. To study antibodies and defences to the fake news market, a series of measures are being implemented ranging from quality stamps on news (Google) to debunking posts to fact checking sites, from tags to the CrossCheck platform.

23 XVII Legislature, no. 2688, Draft Law of initiative of the Senators Gambaro, Mazzoni, Divina, Giro, Corsini, Anitori, Liuzzi, Naccarato, Laniece, Fucksia, Bencini, Albertini, Amoroso, Barani, Bignami, Bonfrisco, Capacchione, Comaroli, Compagnone, Consiglio, Mario Mauro, Milo, Panizza, Puppato, Razzi, Scavone and Serafini. Released to the Presidency on February 7, 2017, “Provisions to prevent the manipulation of online information, ensure transparency on the web and encourage media literacy”, [www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/17/DDLPRES/1006504/index.html](http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/17/DDLPRES/1006504/index.html).

24 Online at [bastabufale.it](http://bastabufale.it)

25 To cite a case not related to the postings of Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Northern League well known for his use of Facebook for hate messages, let’s look at a post of June 29, 2015 published on Facebook by Giorgia Meloni, leader of Fratelli d’Italia, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks that hit Tunisia, France, Somalia and Kuwait. “Many Muslims all over the world interpret their religion in a violent way, and this vision is shared by many who live in the West. This is the cruel reality of the facts. What can we do? Meanwhile, let us avoid importing into Italy a problem that we do not have today: immigration is enough and, above all, immigra-



being sanctioned, intolerant, stigmatizing, racist and xenophobic messages using social networks as a primary channel of diffusion. The passage, almost always automatic, from social networks to traditional mass media, offers an additional channel of propagation of stigmatisation and favors its legitimization.

The need to protect freedom of expression is often invoked by traditional media publishers and journalists to justify the media visibility of discriminatory political speeches. An analysis conducted by Arci<sup>26</sup> on the use of social media by the movements, parties and political groups most “active” on this front, shows that Facebook and Twitter are the most widely used channels. Northern League and CasaPound Italia seems to prefer Twitter, while the majority is more active on Facebook. The analysis of the most recurrent contents and words allow us to identify the themes on which each individual group has built its own rhetoric: the attention to social themes and traditional values of the “Italians” (CasaPound and Forza Nuova); the xenophobic insistence on the “invasion of migrants and Roma” (Northern League and Resistenza Nazionale); the criminalization and stigmatisation of Islam. Incitement to hatred seems to privilege the traditional keywords of populist rhetoric and the new right-wing (“people”, “sovereignty”, “Italians”, “immigrants”), rather than a markedly aggressive vocabulary (the most radical word in this sense is the one formed by the hashtag #stopinvasion). The rhetorical and discursive strategies used by haters on social media do not use words that are openly violent and racist (if not in rare cases). On the contrary, in order to avoid incurring criminal sanctions, they use ordinary vocabulary, within the perimeters of populist public debate, thus concealing the underlying racism.

### The case. From hate speech to actual barricades

The reception of refugees and the numerous protests against it have been much debated topics on social networks, often becoming the object of racist propaganda and explicitly intolerant and violent discourses (up to incitement

tion from Muslim countries is sufficient. The (small) proportion of immigrants that we believe is necessary should come from those people who have shown not to be violent. As far as I know there aren't any cases of terrorism connected with the Filipinos, Argentines, Ukrainians and Peruvian people. Well, let us reward those who have shown themselves to be more easily integrated. For others, closed doors until they have solved the problems of fundamentalism and violence within their culture”.

26 *Discorsi d'odio e Social Media. Criticità, strategie e pratiche d'intervento*, 2016, volume edited by Carla Scaramella, who for Arci coordinated the project *PRISM. Preventing, Inhibiting and Redressing Hate Speech in New Media*, in collaboration with Cittalia, [www.prismproject.eu/hate-speech-and-social-media-the-prism-research/](http://www.prismproject.eu/hate-speech-and-social-media-the-prism-research/)

to violence). As we recently pointed out,<sup>27</sup> while initially, the extreme right-wing and the Northern League moved in substantial autonomy and at local level, carrying out single actions and events with few participants, eventually their initiatives have become structured in a more organized and transversal way, linking to spontaneous protests on the territory, also thanks to the use of social media. In many occasions, political groups have joined emerging committees organizing against the reception of refugees. Nocturnal blitz, daytime assemblies, demonstrations and street protests, have been amplified thanks to the increasingly frequent use of “virtual squares”. In particular, the widespread use of Facebook, which has a very large catchment area, reaching out to people of any age and political affiliation. All this is favoured by a low (if not non-existent) moderation, which makes these spaces an ideal and fruitful channel for propaganda, also racist. Consciously or not, the far-right benefits from these circumstances. While on the “real square” their movements gather a limited number of people; on social networks, where they can gain wider consensus, gaining many *likes* and viral dissemination (especially locally, in small towns, which, one behind the other, allow to expand the sphere of territorial influence), the situation is quite different. And for them this is, in fact, a successful communication strategy in support of xenophobic propaganda campaigns.<sup>28</sup>

### The art of making social media work. “Counter-narration” is possible

On April 30, 2017, Unicef Italia placed the following tweet: “Respect for those who help, respect for those who suffer, respect for those who die, no respect for those who smear”, accompanied by a photo of two people while rescuing a girl at sea. The tweet is published in the middle of the campaign against so-called “migrants’ taxis”,<sup>29</sup> as some NGOs that carry out search and rescue operations in the central Mediterranean had been defined. The tweet receives many critical, offensive and vulgar responses. The social media manager of the account, then, decides to respond to each comment (and for this reason was defined by the press as a “hero”), sending links to the pages with the organization’s balance sheets

27 See: Lunaria (ed.), *Accoglienza. La propaganda e le proteste del rifiuto, le scelte istituzionali sbagliate*, [www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/0FOCUS1\\_DEFINITIVO\\_13marzo.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/0FOCUS1_DEFINITIVO_13marzo.pdf)

28 Important is also the contribution made to the phenomenon by some television broadcasts (such as “Dalla vostra parte”, conducted by Maurizio Belpietro, and *Quinta colonna*, conducted by Paolo Del Debbio, both broadcast by Rete 4, Mediaset channel) that have made the protests against reception a daily occurrence. Live TV is no longer an information service, but becomes a targeted communication campaign, a way of stirring up the spirit of the square.

29 See G. Nalletto, “NGOs: darkness at the end of the tunnel”, in this volume.

to those who question their fairness and transparency, and explaining how the work and roles of the rescuers. This episode offered the opportunity to denounce the need to urgently develop alternative forms of positive counter-narration on social media: the so-called “counter speech”<sup>30</sup> that aims to deconstruct false news, stigmatisation and commonplaces.

The path to contrast hate speech on-line is still long, tortuous and complex at which, at the moment, attempts are being made. However, the need for a strategy capable of intervening in parallel on more than one level appears increasingly evident: that of the instruments of law, aimed at regulating more strictly the activities of managers of social networks; that of technological education and cultural awareness and, therefore, of counter-narration.

30 “Counter-speech is a common, crowd-sourced response to extremism or hateful content. Extreme posts are often met with disagreement, derision, and countercampaigns. Combating extremism in this way has some advantages: it is faster, more flexible and responsive, capable of dealing with extremism from anywhere and in any language and retains the principle of free and open public spaces for debate. However, the forms counter-speech takes are as varied as the extremism they argue against. It is also likely that it is not always as effective as it could be; and some types of counter-speech could potentially even be counter-productive”. See: “counter-speech examining content that challenges extremism online”, *Demos*, October 2015, [www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk).

## Society gets organised: solidarity from below

*Serena Chiodo*

In the context analyzed so far, characterized by a resurgence of many forms of racist phenomena, there are experiences of solidarity with migrants, grass root support, a *de facto* expression of another society, far from populist discourses full of hatred and distrust that emerge in the political debate and national (but also European) media and that constitute the fertile ground for the spread of discrimination and racism.<sup>1</sup>

Practices that depart from this position take the form of self-organized canteens, legal counters, *hotspots* for the free use of wi-fi, self-managed outpatient clinics. They are spaces for autonomous help, in the face of a serious institutional absence, but also for sharing experiences of life as well as, above all, resistance to the model of exclusionary society generally carried out by politics – European, national and local. These are interventions that take hold in so-called emergency situations, but which often stabilize, where the emergency becomes structural, as they are not taken over by the institutions. In recent times, and especially in this last year, many experiences and practices of bottom-up solidarity have shown that Europe is not only affected by feelings of rejection and distrust, but also by understanding, solidarity, respect and a mutual desire for knowledge and sharing.

### *Welcome to Europe*

“For freedom of movement: Independent information for refugees and migrants coming to Europe”. This is the message that stands out, in several languages, on [www.w2eu.info](http://www.w2eu.info), website of a network established in 2009 by hundreds of activists and associations present in Europe and in some countries of North Africa. A map shows the countries where the network is active. Below, another message, which clarifies once again the position of the network: “We

1 For updated information on hate phenomena, the spread of racist discourses and their correlation with the increase in hate crimes, see the Jo Cox Commission’s “Final Report” on intolerance, xenophobia, racism and hate crime, established in May 2016, chaired by the President of the Chamber, Laura Boldrini, and composed of one Member from each political group as well as representatives of the Council of Europe, the United Nations and ISTAT. Here the “Final report”, adopted by the Commission at its meeting on July 6, 2017: [www.camera.it/leg17/1313](http://www.camera.it/leg17/1313)

welcome all travellers on their difficult trip and wish you all a good journey”. Promoter of equal rights for all, the network fight against discrimination and the military and repressive policies implemented by the European Union and individual states. In particular, activists put together and disseminate useful information and contacts to migrant citizens. There are many documents on the website: information about European countries and their respective legislation on migration and international protection, useful numbers in case of need, European regulations regarding the free movement of persons, workers’ rights. Between 2016 and 2017, the network produced the *Welcome to Italy* guide: a document that can be downloaded online and is distributed free of charge in Italian cities, containing basic information on fundamental rights, how to apply for international protection, national legislation, contacts, support and help centres.<sup>2</sup>

### *Ventimiglia No Border*

On June 12, 2015, several people were arrested by the French police. They are migrants, mostly Eritrean and Sudanese, who arrived in Italy by sea, and who try to move from our country to France, passing through Ventimiglia, a border town. Others had tried to cross the border in the days before, undergoing the same treatment. On that day, however, migrants are resisting more strongly, chanting slogans referring to human rights. Officially, the border is supposed to be open as this is the Schengen area, but it is closed for security reasons because of the G7 held in the previous days in Germany. In reality, however, controls persist precisely because of the presence of migrants trying to cross the border. The French police call for the intervention of Italian colleagues, who – also by use of force – load migrants on some coaches.<sup>3</sup> Not everyone: some manage to escape and take refuge on the rocks. They are joined by activists and supporters from all over Italy, France and other European countries: this is the birth of the Presidio Permanente No Borders.<sup>4</sup> On June 20, several people parade through

the streets of Ventimiglia chanting “No borders, no borders”.<sup>5</sup> The event is not a final point, but a beginning: the Bologna network Eat The Rich promotes a relay to bring a field kitchen to Ventimiglia. From food to sociality the step is short, and the initiative is rapidly widening: showers, toilets, a solar panel are mounted to allow the charging of mobile phones, which are essential to maintain contact with friends and relatives. Meanwhile, other supportive people bring food, clothes and mattresses. The camp is consolidated and becomes a spot where many can stop and have rest, support, information: all things that arrive “from below”, since the institutions are absent. Only the police show up on a regular basis trying to evacuate the camp, or presenting ordinances that criminalize solidarity.<sup>6</sup>

There is no shortage of tensions and daily difficulties: but they are overcome by the shared ideal that “freedom is a right of all and everyone”, and that the struggle against a system that represses and excludes is shared by all. “We are not going back”, is the slogan used by the migrants, proclaiming their self-determination.<sup>7</sup>

### *Humanitarian corridors: another journey is possible*

Arriving in Europe in a safe and legal way: a mission that seems impossible if you’re not a tourist, but a person who flees from your homeland to escape wars, persecution, violence or poverty. We are now absurdly accustomed to the tragic images of landings, which show people at extremes, after a journey on the limit of human endurance. But is it really impossible to move around without putting one’s own life and that of loved ones at risk? The answer is no: a section of European civil society has long been calling for humanitarian corridors to be opened, i. e. channels for helping people affected by conflicts or natural disasters.

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Emanuele Giacopetti *La Bolla*, [graphic-news.com/stories/la-bolla-di-ventimiglia/#](http://graphic-news.com/stories/la-bolla-di-ventimiglia/#)

5 See “Ventimiglia – Un 20 giugno per la libertà di movimento, contro la Fortezza Europa”, *Global Project*, June 21, 2015, [www.globalproject.info/it/in\\_movimento/ventimiglia-un-20-giugno-per-la-liberta-di-movimento-contro-la-fortezza-europa/19210](http://www.globalproject.info/it/in_movimento/ventimiglia-un-20-giugno-per-la-liberta-di-movimento-contro-la-fortezza-europa/19210); “Immigrazione, a Ventimiglia corteo di solidarietà con migranti”, *RaiNews*, June 20, 2016, [www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Immigrazione-a-Ventimiglia-corteo-di-solidariet-con-migranti-650674e9-e1ff-47a6-a490-6eb205c9b2e5.html](http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Immigrazione-a-Ventimiglia-corteo-di-solidariet-con-migranti-650674e9-e1ff-47a6-a490-6eb205c9b2e5.html)

6 For further information on the attack in Ventimiglia and on what have been defined as “crimes of solidarity”, please refer to the contribution written by S. Bontempelli for this volume, “Crimes of solidarity”.

7 For further information on The No Borders Camp experience, please refer to Wu Ming, “We Are Strong if You Are Here”: un mese di presidio a #Ventimiglia”, Wu Ming Foundation, 15 July 2015, [www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/2015/07/we-are-strong-if-you-are-here-un-mese-di-presidio-a-ventimiglia/](http://www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/2015/07/we-are-strong-if-you-are-here-un-mese-di-presidio-a-ventimiglia/) The No Borders Camp is still active. For more information: [noborders20miglia.noblogs.org/](http://noborders20miglia.noblogs.org/)

2 *Welcome to Italy*. [www.w2eu.info/italy/en/articles/italy-overview.en.html](http://www.w2eu.info/italy/en/articles/italy-overview.en.html)

3 For an in-depth examination of the events that took place in June 2015 in Ventimiglia, see, among others: Asgi, “Le riammissioni di cittadini stranieri a Ventimiglia”, July 2015, [www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Documento-Ventimiglia.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Documento-Ventimiglia.pdf); A. Ballerini, “Ventimiglia, resistere nel 2015”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, June 17, 2015, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ventimiglia-resistere-nel-2015/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ventimiglia-resistere-nel-2015/); D. Alfonso, G. DeStefanis, G. Filetto, “Ventimiglia, sgomberato il confine, i profughi sulla scogliera: tensioni, due fermati”, *La Repubblica*, June 16, 2015, [genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/06/16/news/ventimiglia\\_iniziato\\_lo\\_sgombero\\_dei\\_migranti\\_sul\\_confine-116952837/?refresh\\_ce](http://genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/06/16/news/ventimiglia_iniziato_lo_sgombero_dei_migranti_sul_confine-116952837/?refresh_ce); L. Fessard, “A Ventimiglia va in scena l’assurdo”, *Internazionale*, July 13, 2015, [www.internazionale.it/reportage/2015/07/13/ventimiglia-migranti-un-mese](http://www.internazionale.it/reportage/2015/07/13/ventimiglia-migranti-un-mese)

4 To retrace the stages of the No Borders Camp, we recommend reading the graphic novel by

Initiatives may include the distribution of medicines and basic necessities, the transfer of civilians to safe areas and the expatriation of refugees, which would guarantee, at last, their right to seek international protection.

The feasibility of such an intervention has been demonstrated by the project put in place by the Comunità di Sant' Egidio, Federation of Evangelical Churches and the Valdese Table, which on December 14, 2015, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Italian Government – in particular with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior – relying on a possibility provided for by Art. 25th of the European visa regulations, i.e., to bring a person with a regular visa for humanitarian reasons into Europe. A document with restricted territorial scope, therefore limited to a country, in which the person arriving must then remain and apply for protection. The associations send volunteers on the spot, who make direct contact with refugees in the countries covered by the project and prepare a list of potential beneficiaries to be transmitted to the Italian consular authorities. These, in turn, issue visas after being checked by the Ministry of Interior. Once they have arrived in Italy legally and safely, refugees can apply for asylum.

It is a pilot project, the first of its kind in Europe, which aims to propose a real alternative to travel in the Mediterranean, taking people away from traffickers and ensuring them a legal and safe journey. At the moment, there are 850 people who have benefited from this measure, which to date has involved Lebanon (from which most Syrian citizens have left, Morocco (where most people from sub-Saharan countries come) and Ethiopia (the country in which the project has involved Eritrean, Somali and Sudanese citizens).

The promoters of the project also take care of the reception, finding places where people arriving in Italy can reside and be assisted, as required by law, for the time necessary to complete the process of the request for protection. The project, which is fully self-financed by the organisations that have promoted it, plans to involve a thousand refugees over a period of two years.<sup>8</sup>

The first intervention was carried out on 29 February and involved 93 people – including 41 minors – who landed at Fiumicino airport. This first stage was followed by others, and other countries are following the Italian example: in March 2017 a memorandum of understanding was signed in France between the *Eliseo*, *Entraid Protestant* and the *Secours catholique*. “The opening of humanitarian corridors shows that it is possible to build regular entry routes without having to

face death's journeys “: these are the words of Daniela Pompei, responsible for services to migrants from the Comunità di Sant' Egidio.<sup>9</sup> And, as pointed out, it is possible to do so using existing European legislative instruments.

### *Baobab: protect people, not borders*

On May 11, 2015, bulldozers tear down what was in fact a shantytown, created over the years in the area of Ponte Mammolo, on the eastern outskirts of Rome. More than 800 people remain homeless.<sup>10</sup> After the eviction, the institutions give no solutions. Many people rely on friends. Others do not know where to go: the recently arrived, in particular Eritrean and Somali citizens, had found support here. They pour into the parking lot of the Tiburtina train station, not far away: but are brutally removed by the police.<sup>11</sup>

The violence of the eviction attracts the attention of the media and of many people, who can now see with their own eyes what it means to arrive from a place of conflict and violence and not have any rights recognized. Some begin to bring food, clothes and blankets to people who have moved from the Tiburtina station, after the police action, to the nearby streets. The municipality opens a space first used as a reception center, and then closed as a result of the investigation Mafia Capitale: it is the Baobab center, in Via Cupa, near the station. Here, many people are concentrated, left without a place to sleep from the removal of the shantytown at Ponte Mammolo. Many people are in transit, arriving in Italy to continue northwards. The municipality provides a space: everything else is done by the volunteers, tackling an emergency situation usually confined to the edge of the city. And that autonomously decide not to stand by and watch. Clothes, food, medicines, information support, legal support, games for the many children present. An outpatient clinic. Day by day, the network of solidarity from below is being expanded. Collections of goods, events to keep the attention high, but also tours to the city, language courses, recreational activities.

Despite the wide and heterogeneous support network, the space in Via Cupa

9 See “Cosa sono i corridoi umanitari?”, Comunità di Sant' Egidio, December 15, 2015, [www.santegidio.org/pageID/3/langID/it/itemID/14724/Cosa-sono-i-corridoi-umanitari-Intervista-a-Daniela-Pompei.html](http://www.santegidio.org/pageID/3/langID/it/itemID/14724/Cosa-sono-i-corridoi-umanitari-Intervista-a-Daniela-Pompei.html)

10 See “Roma: ruspe e sgomberi contro i rifugiati di Ponte Mammolo”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, May 11, 2015, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/roma-ruspe-sgomberi-rifugiati-ponte-mammolo/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/roma-ruspe-sgomberi-rifugiati-ponte-mammolo/)

11 See “Sgomberati i migranti accampati davanti alla stazione Tiburtina, a Roma”, *Internazionale*, June 11, 2015, [www.internazionale.it/notizie/2015/06/11/stazione-tiburtina-migranti-sgomberati](http://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2015/06/11/stazione-tiburtina-migranti-sgomberati)

8 Here you can follow numbers, updates and news related to the project: [www.mediterranean-hope.com/corridoi-umanitari-0](http://www.mediterranean-hope.com/corridoi-umanitari-0)



is cleared several times and then definitely, on December 6, 2015. Again, without any real alternative solution being provided. But the support does not die: it moves behind Tiburtina station, in the so-called “Piazzale est”. A less visible place, where people do not stop bringing food, clothes, and solidarity.<sup>12</sup>

### *City Plaza Hotel*

“Refugee Accommodation and a solidary Space”: this is how the City Plaza Hotel, a hotel in the heart of Athens, defines itself. After six years in a state of abandonment, on 22 April 2016 it was occupied by a group of Greek activists who, together with some migrants and asylum seekers, have given life to this place, lived primarily by families: Afghan and Syrian above all, but also Palestinians, Iranians, Iraqi...

A welcome area, in the face of the European closure, as evidenced by the agreement signed with Ankara, with the aim of keeping migrants in Turkish territory.<sup>13</sup> The exclusionary approach put in place by Europe and the individual States blocks many people on Greek soil, without the possibility of continuing their journey to the countries of Northern Europe: it is on this basis that the first steps are taken towards the occupation of the building, whose intent goes beyond the mere contextual help in the face of the lack of institutional response. Rather, it is in the perspective of a political construction that focuses on the re-appropriation of the rights of all, and not just of migrants. Starting from

12 For a more detailed discussion see, among others: “Roma: l'accoglienza non è istituzionale”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, 18/6/2015, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/roma-laccoglienza-non-e-istituzionale/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/roma-laccoglienza-non-e-istituzionale/); “Baobab Experience parla dopo lo sgombero: Le istituzioni mostrino coraggio”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, October 4, 2016, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/baobab-experience-sgombero-conferenza/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/baobab-experience-sgombero-conferenza/); “Baobab: di sgombero in sgombero, i migranti ostaggio dell'accoglienza che non c'è”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, November 3, 2016, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/baobab-sgombero-sgombero-migranti-ostaggio-dellaccoglienza-non-ce/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/baobab-sgombero-sgombero-migranti-ostaggio-dellaccoglienza-non-ce/). For updates on the Baobab Experience, the association created by a group of volunteers, see: [baobabexperience.org/](http://baobabexperience.org/)

13 For further details on the agreement, see: E. Collett, “The Paradox of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal”, March 2016, Migration Policy, [www.migrationpolicy.org/news/paradox-eu-turkey-refugee-deal/](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/paradox-eu-turkey-refugee-deal/); K. Gogou, “The EU-Turkey deal: Europe's year of shame”, Amnesty International, March 20, 2017, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/the-eu-turkey-deal-europes-year-of-shame/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/the-eu-turkey-deal-europes-year-of-shame/); “Cosa prevede l'accordo sui migranti tra Europa e Turchia”, *Internazionale*, March 18, 2016, [www.internazionale.it/notizie/2016/03/18/cosa-prevede-l-accordo-sui-migranti-tra-europa-e-turchia/](http://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2016/03/18/cosa-prevede-l-accordo-sui-migranti-tra-europa-e-turchia/); “Migranti, il testo completo dell'accordo Ue-Turchia”, *La Repubblica*, March 18, 2016, [www.repubblica.it/esteri/2016/03/18/news/il\\_testo\\_completo\\_dell\\_accordo\\_ue-turchia-135813440/](http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2016/03/18/news/il_testo_completo_dell_accordo_ue-turchia-135813440/); “L'accordo tra Turchia e Consiglio europeo è illegale”, March 23, 2016, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/laccordo-tra-turchia-e-consiglio-europeo-e-illegale/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/laccordo-tra-turchia-e-consiglio-europeo-e-illegale/)

the reaffirmation of the rights of the latter, those of all are reaffirmed in the construction of an alliance of equals. “This is not a simple occupation or social housing project, but the basis for creating policies on migrants' rights in response to what states are not doing. In Greece, there are 57 000 people locked up, forced to live in refugee camps where conditions are terrible. We are opposed to this type of policy. Like us, many migrants and refugees have decided to participate in the project from the outset. Others, on the other hand, found this place after living for months in informal camps around Idomeni, Piraeus or other areas of Greece. Here they found the first dignified place to be”: these are the words of Lina Theodorou, one of the activists who gave life to the project.<sup>14</sup>

More than 400 people live in the City Plaza Hotel. At City Plaza you live and cook together, there is exchange of information, the organizing of language courses, offers of legal support. “There is no support from the state. But there are good food, clean hallways, a pharmacy, a hairdresser, as well as language courses, a library and legal support. Everything is maintained on a voluntary basis and supported through donations. And all decisions are made collectively”, says the website with its particularly significant name: *The best hotel in Europe*<sup>15</sup>.

### *Kapilar: a door to a different world*

Doors: this is the meaning of kapilar in Turkish. It is the name chosen to indicate a “free and communal space” in the community of Basmane, in the historic centre of Izmir. A community where a great many people have found refuge, confined in Turkey while they were travelling to Europe: in particular Syrians fleeing the war. Prejudice, distrust and racism also exists here: there is a lack of linguistic and psychological support, no care services, many people, including children, are exploited by local entrepreneurs, underpaid and forced to work illegally below minimum safety standards. To counter this situation, in Basmane there are also forms of solidarity from below. This is the case of Kapilar, the first social centre in Izmir, founded in January 2016 on the initiative of Turkish, Kurdish, Syrian and international activists. Football, theatre, gardening. Language courses, translation services and InfoPoint's are just some of the activities carried out at Kapilar. “The main objective of our activity is

14 See E. Camilli, “Le storie dei profughi nell'hotel City Plaza di Atene”, *Internazionale*, July 22, 2016, [www.internazionale.it/reportage/eleonora-camilli/2016/07/22/atene-profughi-hotel-city-plaza](http://www.internazionale.it/reportage/eleonora-camilli/2016/07/22/atene-profughi-hotel-city-plaza). For more stories and insights see A. Connelly, “Welcome to the City Plaza: Greece's refugee hotel”, *Irin News*, May 16, 2016, [www.irinnews.org/feature/2016/05/06/welcome-city-plaza-greece%E2%80%99s-refugee-hotel](http://www.irinnews.org/feature/2016/05/06/welcome-city-plaza-greece%E2%80%99s-refugee-hotel)

15 To follow the activities of the City Plaza Hotel: [best-hotel-in-europe.eu/](http://best-hotel-in-europe.eu/)

to stop every segment of racism in the neighbourhood”: says Ömer Selvi, one of the founders of Kapilar.<sup>16</sup> A concrete example of this vision is the so-called “people’s kitchen”, a space in which every inhabitant of the neighbourhood can cook and eat together with others.

### *A new culture of hospitality*

Feeling at home, away from home: this is the idea behind Refugees Welcome International, an initiative launched in Berlin in 2014 and now active in 12 European countries. The network, made up of different realities – in Italy, represented by the non-profit organisation Refugees Welcome – promotes the hospitality of refugees within families, in order to get to know each other, overcome prejudices and build together an active, inclusive and supportive society: the objective is, in fact, to promote a cultural change, which can facilitate the integration of the refugee into the host society on the one hand, and to break down the prejudices of the natives on the other, giving them the opportunity to be more active and aware citizens.<sup>17</sup> The sea search and rescue operations carried out by the NGO’s – of which Grazia Naletto writes in detail in this volume, in the contribution “NGOs: darkness at the end of the tunnel” – are undoubtedly a concrete example of solidarity which, in the face of a serious institutional absenteeism, has the fundamental objective of saving lives. As we have seen, many manifestations of “solidarity from below”, born from emergency situations, have bypassed the character of contingency to become something structural – but it should be pointed out that, unfortunately, also the situations from which these actions were born have not seen any improvement or resolution process; they seem rather to become more permanent and, in fact, thus shedding the character of emergency.

Alongside these, there are also activities that do not arise from “emergency” situations, but that every day show a different world, possible and concretely feasible, often filling gaps created by absent or careless institutions. Schools of Italian, medical clinics, legal offices, social aid: these are just some of the services offered by collectives, associations, groups of individuals, with a vision particularly attentive to mutual knowledge and protection of rights.

16 See “Quando turchi curdi e siriani diventano comunità”, *Frontiere News*, January 2017, [frontierenews.it/2017/01/quando-turchi-curdi-e-siriani-diventano-comunita/](http://frontierenews.it/2017/01/quando-turchi-curdi-e-siriani-diventano-comunita/). Kapilar’s experience is also the subject of an episode of the web doc under construction *Chasing the stars*, by the collective CroMA – Cross Media Action (in progress).

17 For insights, life stories, information: [refugees-welcome.it/](http://refugees-welcome.it/)

### *A school where to get to know the world*

A place where you can learn not only to read and write, but also and above all to grow: this is the mission around which Carlo Pisacane, a nursery and a primary school, revolves. Thus deciding, for teaching purposes, not to follow exclusively the didactic programme. In the heart of the Roman district of Tor Pignattara, which has always been a place of immigration, stands the Pisacane Institute. Students come from more than 18 countries of the world: for this reason it has been renamed *Scuola Internazionale* (International School), a place of meeting and inclusion as well as learning, in which a primary role is played by teachers, but also by parents, who in 2013 gave birth to the *Associazione di volontariato Pisacane 0-11*, which works on social inclusion and interaction between families in the neighbourhood: after-school activities, language courses, music, theatre and dance.

### *A language to communicating*

Then there are those who have always worked to allow agile, equal and inclusive communication. These are the many people who, in collectives, associations, groups of individuals, dedicate themselves to teaching the Italian language, organizing free courses open to everyone.

The network *Scuole Migranti* ([www.scuolemigranti.org](http://www.scuolemigranti.org)) brings together many of the realities that teach free Italian to migrants in Rome and Lazio, such as Asinitas, which since 2005 has been experimenting with language teaching in plural learning contexts, built together with the people who participate in the activities, in an approach centred on the desire to communicate, on the possibilities of strengthening and individual and collective development, encouraging the encounter between individuals, often making up for information gaps and social networks.

From this came out, for example, Asinitas’ project “Parola di mamma”, an Italian course for pregnant women, focused on maternity issues, which in addition to teaching Italian provides an intimate space in which women, foreign and Italian, can get to know each other, confront each other and support each other.<sup>18</sup>

### *Metropoliz, a hybrid city*

A former meat factory on the outskirts of Rome. A factory in disuse and abandoned. A group of people decide to occupy it, and creates a successful experiment of sharing and fighting for the right to housing. A dwelling that is

18 See [www.asinitas.org/](http://www.asinitas.org/) for updates on their activities.

not only a roof above the head, but something more: a free and liberated space, a self-organized experience of recovery of the former factory, but also a sociality that unites, that overcomes prejudices and mistrust. This is Metropoliz, in Via Prenestina 913, in the Roman neighborhood Tor Sapienza, where about two hundred people from different parts of the world live together: Peru, Santo Domingo, Morocco, Tunisia, Eritrea, Sudan, Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Italy.

Occupied in 2009 by the Blocchi Precari Metropolitani – a collective active in Rome dealing with the issue of housing – Metropoliz is an example of the recovery of spaces and relationships, experimentation of a new urban coexistence, representing on the one hand a housing solution for the many families who live there, but also the beginning of a new multicultural experience.

Metropoliz is home, but also so much more: it is a recreation centre, a football field, a collective kitchen, a restaurant, a cinema, a museum. In the space, the many boys and girls present can enjoy a place to play together and an after-school service. A school of Italian helps newcomers with language learning. Music workshops allow the expression of thoughts and emotions through the use of “other” languages.

Through sport, people meet and create networks: Metropoliz participates in the project *Mediterraneo Antirazzista*, that in the last nine years aims to promote an intercultural vision of our society, breaking down barriers through sport. Thanks to film, Metropoliz goes beyond its own walls and reaches other spaces: between 2011 and 2013 Fabrizio Boni and Giorgio De Finis create Space Metropoliz, a short film about the occupation experience.<sup>19</sup>

The walls of Metropoliz are covered with drawings and filled with installations and sculptures: artists of international renown are invited to give their contribution free of charge, outside the logic of the market and individual protagonism, thus giving life to the Maam – *Museo dell'Altro e dell'Altrove*.<sup>20</sup>

Metropoliz is not “only” a residential squat that, like many others, gives a roof to those who risked ending up living in the street. It is an alternative to the logic of profit, it is an idea of a different society, it is a recognition of the hybrid society that is already reality.

A society that is already a reality: this is what the spaces and activities that we have given an account of stand for – a minimal example of the many and

varied experiences that only for reasons of space do not fall within this chapter. These are places and interventions in which sharing, mutual help, support from below, active citizenship translates into concrete actions. Places far removed from politics, with which they often clash, but well anchored in a present that is already being accomplished.

<sup>19</sup> Here is information about the short film: [www.spacemetropoliz.com/](http://www.spacemetropoliz.com/)

<sup>20</sup> A. Rinaldi, G. Santoro, “La storia del Maam. L’arte prende vita in uno strano museo a Roma”, *PiùCulture*, December 2014, [www.piuiculture.it/2014/12/la-storia-del-maam-larte-prende-vita-in-uno-strano-museo-a-roma-1/](http://www.piuiculture.it/2014/12/la-storia-del-maam-larte-prende-vita-in-uno-strano-museo-a-roma-1/)

## Migrants and media



## ***Piazza Pulita*: the quest for high ratings legitimizes racism**

Grazia Naletto

“Lega capoccia”: such was the title of the March 2, 2015, *Piazza Pulita* episode aired on prime time on La7, a few days after the national demonstration held in Rome on February 28 by the Northern League.<sup>1</sup> Its secretary, Matteo Salvini, having developed the ambition to transform it into a national party, has chosen Piazza del Popolo to publicly formalize its alliance with some right-wing movements. He has invited Simone Di Stefano, leader of CasaPound to address the demonstrators. A political “novelty” too succulent for the media to ignore.

In the studio the show’s host, Corrado Formigli, has invited Gianluca Buonanno (MEP of the Northern League) and Diana Pavlovic, actress and Romani activist.

During the show, a debate develops between the two guests that, thanks to some statements by Buonanno, rapidly degenerates, far beyond the right to free speech guaranteed by Art. 21 of the Italian Constitution. After all the format of the show, as that of such like infotainment programs, seems to be designed to exacerbate the debate among the guests into a showdown whereby the audience reactions *simulate* the consensus of the wider public with respect to the opinions expressed by the contenders.

### **Four racist minutes on TV**

In four minutes, the MEP airs a growing number of prejudices and stereotypes, culminating in a sentence that is spectacularly disparaging and racist. The target of his tirade are the Romani. It is useful to reconstruct the sequence.

“Where there are Roma camps there are a number of crazy situations. I am not making this up.” The fact that there is still an ‘institutionalized’ system of camps, where the Roma are segregated, mostly in peripheral areas and in indecent housing conditions, is a peculiarity our country should be ashamed of. But the aim of Buonanno is not to draw attention to the abysmal living conditions of many Romani living in such camps.

“I have nothing against you, to me you are a decent person,” says Buonanno

to Diana Pavlovic, who counters “but I’m gypsy”, he then adds a sentence that would seem to shield him from being accused of racism: “I don’t have anything against the gypsies as such. If one behaves well I do not have any problems, but if one misbehaves, they get out of here.” Yet Diana Pavlovic’s answer, “Then you should take it up with criminals, and pickpockets not with the gypsies,” brings out the real thought of the Northern League politician: “Unfortunately *90% of your people are like this*” a phrase he repeats twice, and which is met by an approving applause from the audience.

The activist’s attempt to remind him of abuse perpetrated on Romani women in Switzerland, who until 1970s were forcibly sterilized, does not dampen the tones of the debate, on the contrary: “But if you use children to do certain things. You should be ashamed of yourselves” (a phrase repeated three times), met by yet another applause, which then reaches a truly thunderous pitch after these words: “Now I have learned that the Roma and gypsies in Italy are paragons of propriety etc. etc. etc. All the others are not. *Gypsies are the dregs of society*” (during the show this phrase, was repeated out loud loudly four times). Formigli tries to silence the applause to no avail, and Buonanno manages to continue, shouting: “*Isn’t it true that we have a lot of Roma and gypsies who are thieves and villains?* Is it true or not? Admit it, admit it.” Another applause, which this time is successfully interrupted by the host who distances himself from this last sentence: “Can I say that an applause to someone who says that gypsies are the dregs of society is an applause this audience should be ashamed of?” (his disclaimer his saluted by a sympathetic applause from a sector of the audience). And continues: “I’m sorry; if the audience and the people in this studio feel offended by what I am saying they are welcome not attend the next episode, there’s no problem. I find that in debates and controversies a line has to be drawn. This is what he thinks, he says it, straight to our faces. I completely disapprove of this phrase.” The invitation to the MEP to apologize to Diana Pavlovic is met by a clear message: “No. I don’t have to apologize.” And at the end of the broadcast, when the activist refuses to shake hands with someone who has so deeply denigrated, despised and offended her and the community of which she is part, Buonanno, still not satisfied, yells “You are the dregs of humanity”, followed by one last round of applause, and the laughter of most of those present.

### **The role of the host, of the guests and of the media**

Such are the most significant moments of the Buonanno-Pavlovic “debate”, concentrated in a few minutes.

Minutes that went viral on the net from one newspaper to another and that

<sup>1</sup> The complete recording of the show can be accessed here: [www.la7.it/piazzapulita/riverdila7/lega-capoccia-03-03-2015-148722](http://www.la7.it/piazzapulita/riverdila7/lega-capoccia-03-03-2015-148722)

can still be displayed today on the show's website as well as those of many national newspapers, despite there has been, as we shall see, a sentence of conviction for discriminatory harassment issued by the Court of Milan.<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the newspapers' share the video of the "duel", using some of the most racist sentences by Buonanno as title with no comments.

And here comes the first double-pronged question. Even if we accept the fact that nobody can predict how a guest will behave on-air, once the racist offense has been uttered, why keep a footage that contains discriminatory messages on line? Isn't this also a way to normalize the incident, by spectacularizing it?

To his credit, Corrado Formigli has promptly distanced himself from the guest. But, as he himself said during the show, "I invited him. *It is not that I did not expect such a sentence.* I don't like the applause it receives. I find it really intolerable". "It's not that I didn't expect this": hence the host recognizes that the discriminatory expressions of Buonanno were predictable, he takes responsibility for having invited him, but "finds intolerable the applause of the audience".

Inviting people already well-known for their denigratory and stigmatizing views, is precisely the host's prerogative who, in this case, could have easily avoided it: among the guests present that evening there was already another member of the Lega Nord, the honorable Massimiliano Fedriga. In the segments shown during the show, the opinions of the leader of his party were amply aired. If the risk of a degeneration of the debate had been contemplated, it is legitimate to wonder whether the need to ensure a fair and civilized debate between the guests in the studio was not sacrificed for high ratings' sake, which can easily be obtained by letting claims such as those of the MEP in question be aired during the show, and perhaps in the process underestimating the possible consequences.

Second. As in other such shows "the audience" is either composed for the most part of the supporters of the guests on the program, or is selected accordingly. It is therefore common for the statements each guest makes to be applauded by someone present in the studio. Yet it is disturbing that not even the most

2 For example as of June 4, 2017, the newspapers that still host the section of the transmission on their sites are: *Corriere della Sera*, *Il mattino*, *Huffington Post*, *Il Messaggero e Stranieritalia*. *it*. Below are the respective links: [video.corriere.it/buonanno-lega-insulta-rom-sono-feccia-societa/9d3685e6-c17c-11e4-9eeb-2972a4034f5c](http://video.corriere.it/buonanno-lega-insulta-rom-sono-feccia-societa/9d3685e6-c17c-11e4-9eeb-2972a4034f5c); [ilmattino.it/societa/persona/buonanno\\_choc\\_contro\\_i\\_rom\\_laquosiete\\_la\\_feccia\\_della\\_societaraquo\\_video/notizie/1215722.shtml](http://ilmattino.it/societa/persona/buonanno_choc_contro_i_rom_laquosiete_la_feccia_della_societaraquo_video/notizie/1215722.shtml); [www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/03/03/rom-buonanno-lega\\_n\\_6790240.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/03/03/rom-buonanno-lega_n_6790240.html); [www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/politica/buonanno\\_rom\\_feccia\\_societa\\_video-899044.html](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/politica/buonanno_rom_feccia_societa_video-899044.html); [www.stranieriitalia.it/uncategorized/rubriche/sos-razzismo/il-leghista-buonanno-in-tv-qrom-e-zingari-la-feccia-della-societaq.html](http://www.stranieriitalia.it/uncategorized/rubriche/sos-razzismo/il-leghista-buonanno-in-tv-qrom-e-zingari-la-feccia-della-societaq.html)

offensive phrase uttered that evening led those present to distance themselves in the appropriate proportion.

Finally, a brief observation regarding the other guests is in order. We do not know whether there have been any protests off-camera. What we do know is that the viewers at home had the opportunity to hear only the voice of the Honorable Fassina (in truth, covered by the yelling and applause of others), who turned to the MEP and called him a racist.

### Diverging rulings

The seriousness of what happened during the show was immediately stigmatized by some anti-racist organizations. Two legal actions were brought with different outcomes.

An appeal for discriminatory harassment on the basis of art. 3, c. 2 of the Legislative Decree 215/2003 was submitted to the Civil Court of Milan on the initiative of Asgi and Naga on July 3, 2015. A complaint to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Rome was filed on the initiative of Arci, Asgi, Associazione 21 luglio, Lunaria and Associazione Roma e Xinti on May 24, 2015 for violation of Art. 3 of Law 654/1975, which punishes "the propaganda of ideas based on ethnic or racial superiority or hatred".

On April 19, 2016, the Court of Milan, Civil Chamber, recognized that associating the term "dregs" to the Romani ethnic group "is not only highly offensive and damaging to the dignity of the recipients, but also takes on an undoubted discriminatory value."<sup>3</sup> According to the Judge, the phrase pronounced by Buonanno "was bound to create a hostile environment, because it was aimed at creating conflict and spreading hatred toward the members of the Romani ethnic group; an intimidating climate, because the concept expressed, based on a distinction between one part of society that deserves respect and the other – the dregs – that, on the contrary, does not deserve it due to its alleged inferiority, had the effect of intimidating the subjects as stated in the art. 3 of the Constitution; a humiliating and offensive climate, offering a comparison with a despicable element such as the "dregs".

The right to parliamentary immunity enjoyed by Members of the European Parliament has not been recognized by the Judge of Milan because this only operates when the contested opinions are uttered "with a connection that must

3 See Court of Milan, Civil Section, Ordinance of April 19, 2016. The text is available here: [www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Tribunale-di-Milano-Buonanno.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Tribunale-di-Milano-Buonanno.pdf)

be direct and clearly established” with the exercise of parliamentary duties.<sup>4</sup> The phrase pronounced by Buonanno does not present, according to the Court, the characteristics of political opinion, but rather those of an insult “which has as its sole purpose to insult and denigrate”. The Member of the European Parliament was therefore ordered to publish the ruling in fonts large twice than usual in a suitable format to ensure adequate publicity” in the daily newspaper *Corriere della Sera* within 30 days of its notification and to pay the costs of the proceedings, and a fine of EUR 6 000 to each of the two applicant organizations.

In a press release, the two organization that promoted the appeal declared their satisfaction by reminding that: “The expression used was clearly damaging to the dignity of the Romani people and constituted discrimination, because it was likely to create a hostile, intimidating and conflictive environment. We remain very concerned about the continuing spread of hate speech, but our action shows that we can and must continue to fight these violations.”

Reacting to racism, then, can be done.

But not always successfully, especially when the criminal judiciary is involved. The outcome of the complaint submitted to the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Rome was completely different, which on February 29, 2016 requested that the proceedings be rejected for two reasons. First, it considered that the object of the complaint was to be understood as of defamation (not disputed by the associations that made the complaint) and considered it impossible “to identify a specific addressee of the offense”, where “such identification is an essential and fundamental condition for attributing the offense to legal relevance”. The organization who had filed the suit, on the other hand, had contested the crime of racist propaganda, which was completely ignored by the Public Prosecutor’s Office.

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<sup>4</sup> The legal reference in this regard is represented by Articles 8 and 9 of the Protocol (no. 7) on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Union, annexed to the EU, FUE and CEEA Treaties, which provide the following provisions. Article 8: “Members of the European Parliament shall not be subject to any form of inquiry, detention or legal proceedings in respect of opinions expressed or votes cast by them in the performance of their duties”. Article 9: “During the sessions of the European Parliament, its Members shall enjoy: (a) in the territory of their own State, the immunities accorded to members of their parliament; (b) in the territory of any other Member State, immunity from any measure of detention and from legal proceedings. Immunity shall likewise apply to Members while they are travelling to and from the place of meeting of the European Parliament. Immunity cannot be claimed when a Member is found in the act of committing an offence and shall not prevent the European Parliament from exercising its right to waive the immunity of one of its Members”. The text of the Protocol is available here: [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012E%2F-PRO%2F07](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012E%2F-PRO%2F07)

Secondly, and this is the direct and explicit contrast with the decision of the Court of Milan, the Public Prosecutor’s Office considered that there was a functional link between the statements made by Buonanno during the show and the exercise of his parliamentary activity.

On June 1, 2016, the associations that filed the suit, filed a formal objection to the Court’s decision. But a few days after the proceedings were interrupted abruptly: on June 5, 2016, Gianluca Buonanno died as a result of a traffic accident.

## *Antiziganism<sup>1</sup> on the front page*

Paola Andrisani

“Let’s let them butcher us. Let’s let them kill us. Let’s stand in line. Let’s wait for our turn. Let us wait one evening for the horror to knock at the door of our house disguised as a Roma.” This is the beginning of an article with the eloquent title: “We shelter the Roma killers and reward the thieves”, which appeared on the front page of the daily *Libero* on November 8, 2015.

The article is a comment on an incident occurred in the province of Ferrara: in Renazzo di Cento the life of two women, aged 84 and 53, is hanging on a thread after a probable theft in their house by a group of criminals has degenerated into violent robbery. The article is by Mario Giordano, current Editor of Tg4, formerly at the head of *Il Giornale* and *Studio Aperto*, who writes: “I recommend you say Romani (...) and not gypsies so not to irritate Boldrini. Even when they are beating you to death, while they are shattering your teeth and jaws, while they send you to the creator in order to take away the pittance you put aside in the piggy bank in a life of sacrifices, make sure you keep it in mind: they are called Romani (...). How do we defend ourselves from Florin and Leonard, the homeless Romani, violent on an operational mission, unscrupulous criminals who manage to massacre two women to take 300 euros from them?”

An article with a clear discriminatory content and strong language that could not go unnoticed. The text, rather than limiting itself to a narrative of what happened, openly attacks Romani citizens, giving ample space to conjecture and generalizations, and helping to fuel social alarm, as well as to revive prejudices and incite intolerant behavior. The content of the article runs counter to what has been reiterated by various international conventions and bodies, which have largely commented on the issue of hate speech. According to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), for example, “States Parties undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination”.

1 According to the definition given by Ecri (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) of the Council of Europe, “Antiziganism is a form of racism that is particularly persistent, violent, recurrent and common, (...) it is a specific form of racism, an ideology based on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nourished by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, through violence.”

On the other hand, the Court of Cassation has also for some time established the three conditions in which freedom of the press is to be considered as legitimate: the social usefulness of information, the truth, the civil form of presentation of the facts and their evaluation. “The form of criticism – explains the jurisprudence – is to be considered uncivilized, not only when it is in excess of the informative purpose to be achieved or lacks serenity and objectivity or, in any case, tramples the basic dignity to which every person is always entitled, but also when it is not marked by fair clarity”.

As it is often the case, the Renazzo di Cento incident receive wide visibility in the national press. However, unlike the daily *Libero*, other newspapers do not mention the ethnicity of the perpetrators.<sup>2</sup>

This is not the first time that we have been faced with newspaper articles of this kind and that, quite rightly, must be sanctioned.

Just to cite a few examples, in July 2015, the Disciplinary Council of the Order of Journalists of Lombardy had initiated two disciplinary proceedings against the journalists Mariacristina Lani<sup>3</sup> and Luca La Mantia,<sup>4</sup> authors of some articles published in *Milano Post* and *Noiroma.tv*,<sup>5</sup> reported by the Osservatorio 21 luglio because of their discriminating tones towards Romani and Sinti. The opening of the two proceedings was the result of two different complaints to the Order by

2 To cite a few titles as an example: “Catch thieves in their home, are left struggling for their lives”, November 6, 2015, *lastampa.it*; “Ferrara, catch the thieves who attack them: two women in serious condition”, November 6, 2015, *ilfattoquotidiano.it*; “Ferrara, 2 women massacred at home by thieves: arrested two young people”, November 7, 2015, *corriere.it*.

3 The disciplinary action against the journalist Mariacristina Lani focuses on two articles published in the online newspaper *Milano Post*, on April 16 and April 23, 2013, respectively. “The gypsy problem is an issue that haunts Europe, whose only solution it seems to pursue is integration policies by allocating funds, which in turn fuels a parasitic way of life among some people”, wrote the journalist in one of her articles. Both articles have been removed and the *italiapost.info* website is no longer accessible. Excerpts are contained in the report made by the Osservatorio 21 luglio, [www.21luglio.org](http://www.21luglio.org)

4 In the article by Luca La Mantia, published in the online newspaper *Noiroma.tv* on April 9, 2014, and entitled “Nomad who?”, Osservatorio 21 luglio noted “the presence of speculation with discriminatory implications towards Roma and Sinti, which are liable to transmit a stereotyped and criminal image of an entire group of people”. The article was removed from the portal and the Osservatorio 21 luglio received a commendable email of apologies, addressed to the entire Roma and Sinti community, from the author of the article.

5 In December 2014, the same editor Michele Ruschioni was sanctioned with caution by the Lazio Journalists’ Association for an op-ed in which he had written: “I have it up to here of gypsies, nomads, Roma or however one should call this scum that wanders around the city with the clear intent to steal, swindle, rob, and screw their neighbour”. This website is no longer accessible. Excerpts of the op-ed can be found in the report made by the Osservatorio 28 luglio, [www.21luglio.org](http://www.21luglio.org)



the Osservatorio 21 luglio, as part of its nationwide monitoring activities on hate speech.

As early as February 2015, Mario Giordano himself was the protagonist of the opening of disciplinary proceedings,<sup>6</sup> by the Lombardy Journalists' Association, for an article titled "Being a Roma is a justification for killing", published in the daily *Libero* on May 17, 2013.

It is in this context that, in December 2015, *Naga onlus* and *Associazione 21 luglio* denounce to the Order of Journalists of Lombardy "the xenophobic intent of the article in which, starting from a criminal incident, tended to criminalize a whole ethnic group". The diffusion of articles such as this – the two associations denounce – "which furthermore are not backed by reliable and unequivocal data, transmits a stereotyped and criminal image of an entire group of people without any distinction whatsoever and is detrimental to the dignity of Romani people". Only in the daily newspaper directed by Maurizio Belpietro – the associations still specify in the text presented to the Order of Journalists – the perpetrators of the crime were defined as 'Romani', while in other news outlets that report the same episode, it was not written that the perpetrators of the crime belonged to this ethnic group".

Two days previous to the hearings before the Order were to be held, however, the daily *Libero* publishes a belated rectification: the two attackers are not "Romani". Mario Giordano tries to defend himself by explaining that the source used was Vox News, a well-known site for the hyper-production of fake-news,<sup>7</sup> able to attract "likes" and clicks on social networks in a very short period.

Following the complaint presented by the two associations, the Association of Journalists of Lombardy, which held the hearings on 18 April 2016, decided to sanction the author Mario Giordano and the then Editor Maurizio Belpietro with the "censure", a disciplinary measure adopted when a journalist commits abuses or serious deficiencies. According to the Territorial Disciplinary Council of the Order of Journalists, the Editor of *Libero* is guilty of omission of control while Mario Giordano is pronounced guilty for the content of the article: "A critical thought that as such would be entirely legitimate if it had no xenophobic

and racist connotations. The very dramatic language used, and the strong tones, further emphasize the repulse for that kind of people: the Romani and the gypsies, people who live in crime and who should not be tolerated". The clumsy and inconsistent reversal made by Giordano, therefore, did not save him from being sanctioned.

The two associations cannot avoid expressing their deep satisfaction with the exemplary sanction, which "could represent an important precedent, aimed at discouraging among information officers languages with strong racist and xenophobic accents".

Although, according to the Association, in 2014 and 2015, hate speeches targeting citizens of Romani origins<sup>8</sup> have declined, antiziganism in Italy remains a dangerous scourge. The ease with which violent and offensive speeches directed against the Romani and Sinti people find fertile ground, both on printed paper and online newspapers, has the consequence of making a negative and stereotyped image of the Roma present in our country increasingly acceptable and popular, among the public.

Moreover, the Order of Journalists has rightly reiterated and, therefore, harshly censored the dissemination, on the basis of unverified news, of ethnic hatred in the press.

<sup>6</sup> The opening of the procedure is the result of a complaint submitted to the Lombardy Order by Associazione 21 luglio e Naga, according to which, in the article, "the author has deviated from the ethical obligation to abide by the established factual truth, and has published speculations of a discriminatory nature ethically motivated", [www.21luglio.org](http://www.21luglio.org)

<sup>7</sup> In this regard, see P. Andrisani (trans) "The perverse interweaving between virtual hate and 'viral' hatred", in Lunaria (edited by), *Chronicles of Ordinary Racism. Third White Paper on Racism in Italy*, Rome 2014, pp. 97-102.

<sup>8</sup> See the data contained in *Antiziganismo 2.0*, the 2013-2014 Report of the Osservatorio nazionale sull'incitamento alla discriminazione e all'odio razziale of the Associazione 21 luglio (2nd edition), [www.21luglio.org/21luglio/antiziganismo-2-0-rapporto-osservatorio-21-luglio-2013-2014](http://www.21luglio.org/21luglio/antiziganismo-2-0-rapporto-osservatorio-21-luglio-2013-2014). While for data relating to 2015 a partial picture can be obtained by consulting the abstract of the Annual Report of the Associazione 21 luglio, [www.21luglio.org/21luglio/discorsi-dodio-Contro-i-rom-quasi-un-caso-al-giorno](http://www.21luglio.org/21luglio/discorsi-dodio-Contro-i-rom-quasi-un-caso-al-giorno)

## The martyrdom of Mohamed Habassi

Annamaria Rivera

In the night of 9-10 May 2016, in Basilicogioiano, a village a few kilometers from Parma, a sort of death squadron – armed with hammer, knuckleduster, baseball bat, iron bar, parrot clamp – broke into the modest apartment of Mohamed Habassi, a 34 year old Tunisian citizen.<sup>1</sup>

The band is headed by two individuals from Parma, “upright citizens” and “well integrated into society”, according to the local news reports. Luca Del Vasto, 46 years old, the initiator of the punitive expedition and its most ruthless executioner, is the manager of a well-known fashionable club in Sala Baganza, whose name today rings tragically paradoxical: Buddha Bar. According to direct and reliable witnesses, he appears to be affiliated to a pseudo-santeria, with related ritual animal sacrifices, that are also used as instruments of pressure and blackmail towards his young employees. His closest accomplice, Alessio Alberici, 42 years old, who was arrested the night of crime, is a locally well-known graphic designer, illustrator and cartoonist. The two are helped by four Romanian bricklayers, who they recruited as auxiliaries, so to speak, for this job.

For about an hour Habassi is subjected to maltreatment, torture and mutilation, probably already tested on animals. Despite the hustle and bustle and the victim’s cries that soar through the village’s silent night, throughout the massacre no one in the neighborhood intervenes.<sup>2</sup> Finally, someone does call the police. But

1 This chapter is based on my three articles on the murder and its context, the result of a small “field” investigation and the collection of testimonies. All three articles were published by *il manifesto*, then taken up by *MicroMega-online*: “Squadroni della morte a Parma”, May 25, 2016: [ilmanifesto.info/squadroni-della-morte-a-parma/](http://ilmanifesto.info/squadroni-della-morte-a-parma/); “I lati oscuri di un calvario”, June 10, 2016: [ilmanifesto.info/i-lati-oscuri-di-un-calvario-2/](http://ilmanifesto.info/i-lati-oscuri-di-un-calvario-2/); “Brava gente a Sala Baganza”, July 26, 2016: [ilmanifesto.info/brava-gente-a-sala-baganza/](http://ilmanifesto.info/brava-gente-a-sala-baganza/)

2 Luigi Alfieri, founder of Parma Non Ha Paura, a citizen committee, soon spoke out to defend the good name of his neighbours, with arguments that, to put it mildly, were inadequate for the atrocities committed. According to him, Habassi’s neighbours are “good citizens”. What is unheard of, he writes, is that after the crime no authority went “to comfort” the local populace, first “shocked by human evil and wickedness, by the screams, by the noise of broken bones and then made fun of”. Moreover, these poor people “would like to sell their apartments, but nobody will buy them”: “The modalities of the massacre of Habassi are a confirmation of this”, *parmadaily.it*, May, 22 2016: [www.parmadaily.it/267054/le-modalita-del-massacro-di-habassi-ci-danno-ragione/](http://www.parmadaily.it/267054/le-modalita-del-massacro-di-habassi-ci-danno-ragione/)

when they finally manage to get to the scene, it is already too late. The poor man is dead, tortured and mutilated, he died from internal and external hemorrhages.

When the cruel nature of the murder is taken into account, the stated motive could not be more petty and tragically trivial: Habassi, who was unemployed, was not paying the rent of the apartment owned by Del Vasto’s girlfriend. The apartment had been leased to Hassan’s Italian girlfriend who had died eight months earlier in a terrible car accident, to which their five-year-old boy was miraculously survived. As I have already written elsewhere, the very fact that the two perpetrators have considered such a motive as credible and commensurate with such a fierce execution reveals their moral misery and a distorted, or even delusional, perception of reality, which includes the rather widespread notion that the life of an “extra-communitarian” is worth very little or nothing.

One of the many “mysteries” of this case remains the silence and/or indifference of the national media<sup>3</sup>, with the exception of *La Stampa*, which on May 12 published an article on the murder quite faithful to the facts, by Franco Giubilei<sup>4</sup>, but did not follow-up. The indifference is even more striking when one takes into account the insistent and almost morbid attention devoted by the media just two months before to a very similar murder that had an analogous *modus operandi*: that of Luca Varani, killed the night between March, 4 and 5 by Manuel Foffo and Marco Prato, who were equally under the influence of alcohol and cocaine. He too been subjected to maltreatment and torture, and had finally bled to death.

Habassi’s atrocious murder not only remains for a long time confined to the local news but is immediately represented in a way sympathetic towards the two main torturers. The victim, on the contrary, is described by some newspapers as shady, suspected of being (or of having been) a petty drug-dealer; moreover, as was emphasized in the local edition of a national daily newspaper, “not loved in the neighborhood at all” also for the bad habit of listening to music at high volume (sic): in other words, someone who was looking to trouble.

There is no doubt that such an underestimation can also be explained by the crime scheme, which casts the “extra-communitarian” in the role of the victim and the two “respectable” Italian citizens in that of the main perpetrators: a scheme that conflicts with the one, usually favored by most of the media, where the roles are inverted. And yet – as Giovanni Maria Bellu will later remark – to

3 Some, such as *la Repubblica*, have repeatedly dealt with the case, but relegated it to the Parma edition.

4 F. Giubilei, “Parma, torturato e ucciso perché non pagava l’affitto”, *La Stampa*, May 12, 2016: [www.lastampa.it/2016/05/12/italia/cronache/parma-torturato-e-ucciso-perch-non-pagava-laffitto-Wf133hj444fdTPyJKnxeGJ/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2016/05/12/italia/cronache/parma-torturato-e-ucciso-perch-non-pagava-laffitto-Wf133hj444fdTPyJKnxeGJ/pagina.html)

give a certain “newsworthiness” to such an incident, among the most ferocious of the last decades, there is the involvement in the punitive expedition of the four Romanian citizens. Not to say – adds Bellu – that given the presence of a child who was left orphan as a result, the case would also have lent itself to a pietistic narration.<sup>5</sup>

Further explanations are in order; concerning a certain local code of silence – in particular in Sala Baganza, the “kingdom” of Del Vasto, as well as the seat of an extensive ‘ndranghetista network – just as in other Emilian municipalities.<sup>6</sup> As I was able to ascertain during my brief investigation, some of its inhabitants continued, even after the terrible murder and confession of the two main perpetrators, to show solidarity or indulgent attitudes towards the initiator and principal perpetrator of the slaughter, who – according to a couple of my witnesses – “for many months before the crime, was publicly talking about his intention of killing Habassi”.

Although very relevant from every point of view, this case did not cross the confines of local news until May 25, 2016, when *il manifesto* published the first of my three articles; which was then taken up by *MicroMega-online* and subsequently appeared, also in French, on various sites and blogs. Shortly afterwards, Radio Radicale and *Tutta la città ne parla* a show on the state-run Radio3. *IlFattoQuotidiano.it* finally take note of the case and make it the opening article of its June 1st edition: no less than twenty-one days after the fact.<sup>7</sup> The piece is the object of an avalanche of comments, whose dominant theme is – and I quote one almost literally – “the absconding of institutions” that do not protect “the right of citizens to private property”: a commentary that, starting from the supposed motive, sums up, almost epigraphically, cynicism, racism, even the classism that characterizes the treatment of such a chilling case.

On the political and social side, in Parma there was, indeed, some reaction, but belated, ephemeral, and inadequate to the seriousness of the incident. On May, 28 2016, during a demonstration promoted by the Anti-Fascist and Antiracist

Coordination (which was promoted by Anpi), a group of Tunisian citizens parade with a banner asking for justice and truth for Mohamed. At the same time, the collective Rete Diritti in Casa published and circulated a communiqué entitled “Death of eviction: when the value of a life is worth less than rent”.

It is in this context that the Court of Parma’s first instance judgment, handed down on June 10, 2017, is reached. While Del Vasto, despite the aggravating circumstances of premeditation, cruelty and futile motives, is sentenced to thirty years in prison thanks to the abbreviated rite, Alberici is blessed with a sentence reduced to sixteen years, on grounds that he was “temporarily mentally impaired”. His sentence was slightly higher than the one meted out to one of the four Romanian defendants, all found guilty of having participated in the punitive expedition, albeit only at an early stage and with secondary roles.<sup>8</sup>

5 G. M. Bellu, “*Torturato a morte nella bella Italia. Il mistero della mattanza ignorata dai media*”, May 29, 2016: [notizie.tiscali.it/feeds/torturato-morte-italia/](http://notizie.tiscali.it/feeds/torturato-morte-italia/)

6 I should mention that Sala Baganza was involved, together with other Emilian municipalities, in the maxi-judicial inquiry of the Bolognese Public Prosecutor’s Office on the infiltration of the ‘ndrangheta. However, during the first phase of the trial, it was the first municipality of the province of Parma to file a civil action suit, receiving 150 thousand euros of compensation.

7 S. Bia, “Parma, tunisino ucciso da 2 italiani. Gli amici: ‘Ci ammazzano come bestie e non ne parla nessuno’”, *ilfattoquotidiano.it*, June 1, 2016: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/06/01/parma-tunisino-torturato-e-ucciso-da-2-italiani-gli-amici-ci-ammazzano-come-bestie-e-non-ne-parla-nessuno/2784417/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/06/01/parma-tunisino-torturato-e-ucciso-da-2-italiani-gli-amici-ci-ammazzano-come-bestie-e-non-ne-parla-nessuno/2784417/) – [disqus\\_thread](#)

8 I am referring to Jonel Togan, who was sentenced to eleven years and two months. Of the other three, nine and six months, six years and six months were inflicted on Jonel Vrabie, six years and eight months on Cristinel Barbu and Valentin Kosma. According to the testimony of a Tunisian citizen, considered super-witness since he was present in the apartment at the time of the commando’s raid, and therefore questioned by the prosecutor Daniela Nunno in the course of the preliminary investigations, Barbu and Kosma, who acted as look-outs, would have fled as soon as they were aware of the intentions of Del Vasto and Alberici; the other two Romanians would not have participated in the final massacre. See: “Omicidio Habassi, il supertestimone: in casa soltanto ‘i due italiani’. Del Vasto e Alberici non rispondono”, *Leco di Parma*, October 10, 2016: [www.ecodiparma.it/2016/10/10/omicidio-habassi-supertestimone-casa-due-italiani-del-vasto-alberici-non-rispondono/](http://www.ecodiparma.it/2016/10/10/omicidio-habassi-supertestimone-casa-due-italiani-del-vasto-alberici-non-rispondono/); F. Devincenzi, “Omicidio Habassi: tutti condannati. 30 anni a Del Vasto”, *Parmapress24.it*, June, 11 2016: [www.parmapress24.it/2017/06/11/omicidio-habassi-tutti-condannati-30-anni-del-vasto-16-ad-alberici/](http://www.parmapress24.it/2017/06/11/omicidio-habassi-tutti-condannati-30-anni-del-vasto-16-ad-alberici/)

## 45 seconds in Scoglitti

Paola Andrisani

On August 16, 2016, Lubhaya Ram, a 43 year old Indian citizen, is walking between the stalls of the Scoglitti seafront promenade (province of Ragusa) when he suddenly finds himself in front of a 5-year-old unaccompanied girl. He picks up the girl and holds her in his arms.<sup>1</sup> The scene took place under the eyes of passers-by and inhabitants of the small village, who, knowing the man by sight<sup>2</sup> for some previous misdemeanors (thefts and state of drunkenness), immediately think (a facile automatism linked to prejudice) that he wants to kidnap her.

A few hours after the event, the parents of the little girl file a complaint to the Carabinieri, in which they claim that the man “grabbed” the little girl and then ran away for a hundred meters, before her father managed to reach him and recover his daughter. “He stopped only because we stopped him” – commented the mother – “I was on the waterfront, going up the stairs. The girl was with my husband at the top of the stairs. A friend pointed out to me that my little girl was in the arms of a stranger who kept her very close to himself, with the face almost under her armpit, locked to him.” Thus, “the Indian”, as the local and national press immediately labeled him, was accused of kidnapping and arrested by the Carabinieri a few hours after the incident.<sup>3</sup>

As usual, the mud-slinging media machine soon kicks in, and so also the national press emphasizing the tones. In this regard, *Libero* defines “the Indian”: “Clandestine, homeless, with previous drug convictions, the man had already been expelled from the national territory but never left, remaining in Italy in order

to commit crimes”.<sup>4</sup> And in all newspapers, both online and printed, the photo of Lubhaya’s battered and stunned face is published on the front page.

However, with great general “dismay”, the prosecutor does not validate the detention (the presuppositions for keeping him in prison are not applicable, i.e. the repetition of the crime or the danger of flight), but issues the order to leave Italy within seven days (the second expulsion decree, after the one received for the expiry of the residence permit, which he ignored, in 2015). The man, during his interview, claims to have held the girl in his arms for only 45 seconds and to have walked for no more than 10 meters with her in his arms.

The Public Prosecutor’s Office, for its part, points out that the law does not contemplate a detaining decree for an offence that remains, at present, an “attempt”.<sup>5</sup> At most they could have decided on some other form of precautionary measure, but obviously they did not consider it necessary in this case. But it is the daily *Il Giornale*, after a few more days, which boasts that, as a result of their “denunciation”, “the clandestine man who kidnapped a child on the beach of Vittoria returns in front of the prosecuting judge”.<sup>6</sup>

However, the man is freed for the second time. In the meantime, the comments on the web,<sup>7</sup> by ordinary people and representatives of the political world, together with some parliamentary questions, are spreading like wildfire: the work of the judiciary is also being called into question.

Thus, Gasparri of *Forza Italia*<sup>8</sup> defines the conduct of the Ragusa Public Prosecutor’s Office as “a shame” (“I take positive note of the initiatives of Minister Orlando to ascertain the possible and probably extremely serious errors of the Judiciary of Ragusa that lets a person who would not have any right to stay in Italy walk (...) Letting illegal immigrants, and alleged kidnappers of children roam free is really disconcerting. But what sort of magistrates do we have in Italy?”)<sup>9</sup>

1 The national press reports of the alleged kidnapping the next day. See: “Tenta di rapire una bimba di cinque anni in spiaggia: arrestato indiano nel Ragusano”, August 17, 2016, *palermo.repubblica.it*; “Paura a Scoglitti, un indiano tenta di rapire una bimba di 5 anni: arrestato”, August 17, 2016, *secoloditalia.it*.

2 “L’indiano si guadagna da vivere facendo tatuaggi all’henné in spiaggia, e la notte rimane spesso a dormire sull’arenile di Scoglitti”, August 21, 2016, *ragusa.gds.it*.

3 The man is arrested on charges of aggravated kidnapping and is put in jail in Ragusa, to be interrogated as to his motive for the attempted kidnapping. The subsequent and rapid news of the release of the man, who remains under investigation, causes the protest to be mounted on social media. There are even those who post on Facebook the photo published by the Carabinieri to “identify” the man urging the public to “keep their distance” if they see him (see also “Tenta di rapire una bimba, è libero Meloni: ‘Ma che giudici abbiamo?’”, August 20, 2016, *iltempo.it*).

4 “Indiano cerca di rapire una bimba in spiaggia a Ragusa: arrestato, ma è già libero”, *liberoquotidiano.it*, August 18, 2016.

5 After a few days, the Chief Prosecutor of Ragusa, Carmelo Petralia, ironically comments, that the relevant misdemeanor in this case “would be that of ‘taking the girl in her arms’” – which obviously does not exist.

6 “Il rapitore subito scarcerato preso e di nuovo interrogato”, *ilgiornale.it*, August 21, 2016.

7 “Ragusa, rilasciato dopo un giorno l’uomo accusato di aver rapito bimba in spiaggia”, *palermo.repubblica.it*, August 18, 2016.

8 Also from Forza Italia, Lucio Malan says: “Italy is really a ‘Cockaigne’, the Indian will have thought. How can the danger of repetition be denied? The message will surely also pass abroad: if you want to be maintained and still commit crimes, come to Italy”, *ragusa.gds.it*, August 21, 2016.

9 Inspectors at the Ragusa Public Prosecutor’s Office as decided by the Minister of Justice on



“Once we have sent the clowns that govern us back home, we will reintroduce the crime of illegal immigration and the certainty of punishment and insanity like these will no longer happen”, writes Giorgia Meloni, President of *Fratelli d'Italia*, on Facebook.

Roberto Calderoli (Northern League), invokes a punitive “justice” against a “clandestine” (“I expect the President of the Republic, given the immobility of the High Council of the Judiciary and the Minister of Justice, to personally intervene, in his capacity as President of the High Council of the Judiciary, and to immediately clarify the shameful vicissitude of Vittoria, where an illegal immigrant, with serious criminal precedents and with a measure of deportation has been set free, thus rendering the work of the police, that had arrested him, useless”).<sup>10</sup>

The Minister of Justice, Andrea Orlando, targeted by such accusations and controversy,<sup>11</sup> asks the Ministry Inspectorate to initiate preliminary investigations into the case.

Days go by, but the press does not relent and “embellishes” the incident further. Lubhaya receives various threats and, out of fear, spends the days separating him from his return home in the Carabinieri barracks. The man is then transferred to the Cie (Centre of identification and expulsion) in Caltanissetta, from which, within 90 days, he will be expelled, after the authorization of the judicial authority. He himself applies for transferred to the Cie, worried about his safety, after having received death threats by a passer-by.

And while his destiny is inexorable, the testimonies of what happened ironically become increasingly confused, to the point of describing a very different course of events from that reported at the beginning of the story.

According to the testimonies collected in the days following the alleged kidnapping, which were then confirmed by a rectification on the part of the child's parents, Lubhaya (who at the time of the incident was drunk) had, of course, definitely taken the child in his arms, but, contrary to what the father had said on the same day of the incident, the event had not taken place on the beach, but on the street, and the man had not started to run away, but rather had stayed put in a stupefied state of mind. And the hypothesis that emerges is that his behavior was simply due to drunkenness.

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the failure to detain child kidnapper “, August 22, 2016, *corrieredinagusa.it*

10 “È ospite di un centro il 43enne indiano che avrebbe tentato di rapire la bimba”, August 23, 2016, *corrieredinagusa.it*.

11 It should be noted that, after the release, in addition to the controversy, a veritable psychosis spreads in the Ragusa area. There are dozens of calls to law enforcement agencies to report “suspects”. All false alarms. However, the Carabinieri reinforce their controls on the beaches.

Even after days of infamous insults, it turns out that Lubhaya, in 2010, had helped to save a person at sea, and that the parents of the child would not have had the intention to denounce the incident, but it would have been “others” to call the Carabinieri. In less than fifteen days everything has changed. But the media tend to speak very little of all this, rather intent on “insisting” and corroborating the version of the facts that pictures the protagonist as a criminal “illegal migrant” to be expelled at all costs because he is “dangerous”.

Although the kidnapping hypothesis is increasingly weaker, on September 6, the Interior Minister Angelino Alfano triumphantly announces: “Today we have expelled the Indian citizen, Ram Lubhaya, who on August 16, in Scoglitti, in the province of Ragusa, was responsible for the attempted kidnapping of a child under the age of 14. On August 24, following a detention decree issued by the Quaestor of Ragusa, he was escorted to the Cie (Centro di Identificazione e Espulsione) of Pian del Lago in Caltanissetta. Today, with a flight from Rome Fiumicino to New Delhi, the Indian citizen has been escorted back to his country.”<sup>12</sup> Lubhaya thus left Italy against his will, before actually knowing the outcome of the judicial proceedings.

At the beginning of October 2016, he definitively closes his accounts with the Italian justice system with a sentence of “no probable cause”,<sup>13</sup> issued by the magistrate heading the preliminary investigations of Ragusa. Prosecutor Petralia explains: “It is not a matter of acquittal on the merits”, since the alleged Indian kidnapper has been expelled from Italian territory, “and the forced expulsion has been communicated, executed and verified”. It is, quite simply “a ritual formula”. So Lubhaya was not acquitted because there was the certainty that he was not an aspiring kidnapper, but simply because he had already been expelled.

Therefore, according to the Italian courts, the case is closed, but we will never know how it would have ended. “All that remains is regret – says Biagio Marco Giudice, lawyer of the repatriated suspect – not being able to inform Mr Lubhaya, who has always declared himself innocent, it will be difficult for him to know that he has not been prosecuted”.

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12 “Tentato sequestro a Ragusa. L'indiano è stato espulso”, September 6, 2016, *ilgiornale.it*.

13 “L'indiano accusato di rapimento. Il Gip: ‘Non luogo a procedere’”, October 8, 2016, *corriere.it*; “Ragusa: niente processo per l'indiano accusato di tentato rapimento”, October 5, 2016, *repubblica.it*.

## Inciting hatred

Serena Chiodo

On April 7, 2017, Stockholm is shaken by a terrorist attack. A man rams the truck he is driving into the crowd, killing four people. The investigations identify the man as an affiliate of the fundamentalist group Daesh, generally known as Isis.

The Stockholm attack is not the only one launched by the fundamentalist movement against Europe: it arrives after the attacks in Brussels (Belgium, March 22, 2016), Nice (France, July 14, 2016), Berlin (Germany, December 19, 2016), London (England, March 22, 2017), just to name a few. Other non-European countries are also subjected to terrorist acts by Isis, and only in some cases conquer the pages of European newspapers: it is the case, for example, of Istanbul (January 1, 2017, June 28, 2016), Dhaka (July 1, 2016), Cairo (Egypt, November 20, 2016), Tanta and Alessandria (Egypt, April 9, 2017).

In the aftermath of the attack in Sweden, the Editor of the daily newspaper *Libero* decides to focus on the various attacks in Europe. It does so with an article published on April 9, 2017.<sup>1</sup> “Reacting with violence” is the title of the editorial, whose preamble is “If we do not stop it, Islam will exterminate us all”. The title does not offer information: rather, it expresses an opinion, and even more calls for violent action. The entire article runs along the track drawn by this sentence.

The aftermath of every Islamic terrorist attack, the media sings the usual litanies, one reads and hears useless sermons. Europe must – it is claimed – remain firmly united and adopt a concerted policy. (...) Rhetoric, words, bla blah blah without construct.

This is Feltri in the opening of his op-ed. The terms he chooses – *litanies, useless sermons, blah blah blah-without construct* – negatively characterize any idea other than that of the writer. But what ideas, and what media, is Feltri referring to? It is not specified: it is limited to a general and general criticism.

The last country struck by the Isis dementia was Sweden, a social paradise, hospitable and generous with foreigners, ready to extend its rich welfare to anyone who sets foot there. One wonders. Why are the barbarians of Middle Eastern origins so idiotic as to target the same Scandinavian people who tre-

<sup>1</sup> See: [www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/opinioni/12353750/feltri-li-accogliamo-e-loro-ci-am-mazzano-reagiamo-con-violenza.html](http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/opinioni/12353750/feltri-li-accogliamo-e-loro-ci-am-mazzano-reagiamo-con-violenza.html)

at them as princes or at least brothers? Logic does not help us to understand. Impossible to grasp the reasons why a people as gentle as the Swedish is ferociously targeted by the acephalous and buzzing fanatics of Allah.

Feltri draws a picture without a context, which develops on two lines: the de-  
cision of fundamentalists and the description of Sweden as a perfect country. A polarized and stigmatizing reading, which as such excludes any nuance and attempt of analysis. But this seems to be the Editor’s objective: he himself affirms it.

It is foolish to waste time in sociological, psychological and political analyses. With a rational system we do not get to the head of anything, and experience shows this.

Faced with the context in which we find ourselves, therefore, the author does not wish to go into more detail: a commentary that, being expressed by the Editor of a newspaper, imposes a reflection on the particular objectives of a daily newspaper, among which there would not seem to be even that of informing, since the article does not present any data; yet, Feltri affirms: *experience shows us this*, but based on which facts? The question is left unanswered.

As we go on reading his article, its primary objective would seem to be to provide a space in which to vent every possible thought. This becomes clear later on, when Feltri finally reveals his views regarding the international situation.

For years, the West has been suffering chilling violence from bearded invaders, who hate even their own women, and us, perfect fools that we are, instead of kicking them back to their deserts, we do everything we can to appease them, court them, we surrender our traditions in the hope that they will accept us. But shouldn’t it be the Islamists, once they come here and bust our balls, and eat our free food in the process, to adapt to our customs in order to be tolerated? Dream on. We let ourselves being intimidated by Muslims and subjected to their medieval customs in the hope that they will like us. All in vain, because instead of being grateful, they kill us with bombs, with suicide bombers and now – it is the new fashion – with lorries thrown into the crowds.

It is a continuous polarization that Feltri is suggesting, a coarse simplification that knowingly uses a down-to-earth vocabulary. No data is given to support such categorization. Moreover, the Director himself has already specified at the beginning that it is neither the analysis nor a system of rational knowledge that interests him. This is further confirmed:

We react according to convenience. Let us stop keeping our borders open and being moved to compassion for those who present themselves as poor

people, arriving in our countries with ramshackle boats, who then, after having enjoyed our pity, start to teach us how we should live and, if we do not do it quickly enough, massacre us. We really are cretins as well as cowards. Either we change our attitude, or we will be exterminated.

After having divided the world in half – “fanatics who live in the deserts, free-riding Islamists, Muslims with medieval customs on the one hand, and us fools, who surrender our traditions, who let ourselves be subjugated and be exterminated on the other” – Feltri takes a step forward and faces the moment when these two worlds – clearly defined and homogeneous – intertwine through migration. A complex and articulated social phenomenon.

Thus, the Editor of *Libero* sums the issue as follows: there are people who present themselves as poor, who arrive in Europe by boats and, taking advantage of our pity, then massacre us if we do not adopt their customs. A synthesis that, euphemistically speaking, is very partial. Faced with this scenario, Feltri makes his proposal explicit.

Let us start by suspending rescue missions at sea. After the third sinking of these ramshackle, once these desperate understand that they no longer will be rescued, they will persuade others not to leave and the landings will cease as if by magic. End of occupation.

Here is the idea of the Editor of *Libero*: let the people drown. If we previously condemned the *idiots* who *massacre*, the same thing does not apply in reverse: *we* can let them die at sea. Indeed, according to Feltri we should do it to set an example to those who aspire to leave. Despite the fact that the many reports from different sources – Police, NGOs, institutions – deny any connection between migration and terrorism, our Editor takes it for granted, giving it to the reader as an absolute truth. At the same time, the causes of migration, the reasons why they embark in such a journey and the responsibilities of European countries are completely ignored. This is the thought expressed on the migration phenomenon – which Feltri defines as *occupation*, yet another extremely aggressive term, and totally misleading with respect to reality to boot.

What about the people already present in Europe?

All that remains is to select the worst of them – who we know – and send them right back home. Do they dislike European styles? They might as well go back from where they came from. Our laws do not allow it? Let us change them. Against those who want cut your throat you cannot react with bouquets of flowers. The machine gun is more appropriate. More effective.

In the conclusion the article calls for forced repatriation, expulsion and violence. An invitation that directly solicits the reader, with a communicative strategy that first appeals to a collectivity – us – but then zeros on the individual, in a rhetorical construction that aims to achieve greater involvement of the reader.

When approaching a newspaper article, you should ask yourself what kind of service is being offered to the reader. Journalism can inform, and contribute to a better understanding. The journalist's work should allow us to open a window on the world and develop awareness of it through data and information. Feltri's editorial opens a window only on the thoughts of *Libero*'s Editor. It does not provide anything, except resentment. It provokes and incites hatred.

The article does not inform, on the contrary: it puts together a series of commonplaces and describes the context as a shapeless mass, which therefore frightens because it is little recognizable. The “not us” are all the “Others”: migrants, refugees, Muslims. Paradoxically, Isis terrorists are even lumped together with those who flee from the violence the terrorists themselves have provoked. It is not by chance that no mention is made of the terrorist attacks that have struck non-European; yet, two have occurred in Egypt, just on the day Feltri's article is published on *Libero*. To cite these two attacks would in fact mean to show that such “Others” do not in fact exist.

The differences present within the universe identified as “migrants” are numerous. For example, their motivations and national origins are two elements that already in themselves show how this group is internally diverse, and to what extent considering it a homogeneous entity has little adherence to reality. But recognizing differences, multiplicity, factual reality, would make it impossible to reduce the world to a misleading dichotomy – us and them – where “they” are our antagonists.

Yet, this is the objective of the article; to reaffirm the existence of two opposing groups, *us* and *the others*. No data is mentioned, and no information is provided, not even in support of the Editor's thesis – that is, repatriation and violence. Strong words, aggressive and offensive, accompany this idea, with the aim of instilling fear in the reader on the one hand, and on the other hand contempt and hatred for all those who are *not us* and are rendered an indistinct mass.

Analysis, the Editor claims, is not his goal. The choice is another: the rhetorical strategies, the language and construction of the article aim at the base instincts, and not at the head, of the reader, with the effect of abetting hatred and violence.<sup>2</sup>

2 See: “Chiamiamolo col suo nome: incitamento all'odio e alla violenza”, *Carta di Roma*, April 10, 2017, [www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/libero-incitamento-odio-violenza/](http://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/libero-incitamento-odio-violenza/)

## The “veil” and neutral discrimination

Paola Andrisani

The question of the so-called Islamic “veil” periodically ignites the national and European debate on several fronts. And this includes also the legal domain at the highest levels. As a result, the Court of Justice of the European Union is being called upon to provide clarification on the case of two Muslim workers been fired from the companies for which they were working as a result of their refusal to comply with the obligation to wear “neutral” clothes as laid down by the company’s internal regulations.

The first case concerns Samira Achbita, a Muslim woman, hired in 2003 by the Belgian company G4S<sup>1</sup> that provides reception services, to work as a receptionist. At the time the contract was signed, the company had an unwritten rule prohibiting employees from wearing visible signs of their political, philosophical or religious beliefs in the workplace.

In April 2006, Achbita informed her employer that she intended to wear the veil during working hours and the management replied that this behavior would not have been tolerated, as it was contrary to the “neutrality” the company had to maintain in contact with its clients.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the woman said that she would wear the veil as of May 15. Thus, on June 12, 2006, Achbita is fired and files a complaint before the Belgian courts.<sup>3</sup>

The other ruling of the Court of Justice deals with Micropole SA,<sup>4</sup> a private company based in France, which on June 22, 2009, fired Asma Bougnaoui, a designer engineer for the company since July 2008. The woman wanted to wear the veil, but the company, following a customer complaint, reiterated the principle of

the “necessary neutrality towards the clients”. In view of the refusal to comply with the employer’s decision, the Micropole fires Bougnaoui, who in turn files a complaint.<sup>5</sup>

This is the first time that the Court of Justice<sup>6</sup> has ruled on the issue of discrimination on religious grounds in the workplace. By applying Dir. 2000/78/EC the Court on March 14, 2017, rules that “the prohibition on wearing an Islamic veil, resulting from an internal rule of a private company prohibiting the visible wearing of any political, philosophical or religious mark<sup>7</sup> in the workplace, does not constitute a direct form of discrimination<sup>8</sup> on the basis of religion or belief under the terms of the Directive”. If the company has been clear in establishing this rule, “dismissal does not constitute a direct form of discrimination”. If this is not the case, the Court still argues, the employer cannot terminate the contract solely because of such a request from a client.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, there is much confusion surrounding the content of the ruling. The interpretations differ: is it an attack on all religions or is it a firm defense of secu-

5 The French Supreme Court asks the Court of Justice whether, according to the Directive, an employer’s wish to take into account a customer’s request that its services no longer be provided by an employee wearing the Islamic veil can be regarded as an ‘essential and determining requirement for the performance of his work’.

6 The numerous rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (which has jurisdiction to rule on violations of the Cedu and not on EU law) regarding possible violation of freedom of thought, conscience and religion referred to in Article 9 and the prohibition of discrimination referred to in Article 14 Cedu, are another matter. Under the first provision, restrictions on the freedom of expression of one’s religious beliefs may be subject to restrictions and interference only if they serve legitimate purposes in a democratic society, aimed at pursuing in a proportionate manner public security, the protection of public order, health or morals or other people’s fundamental rights which are equally worthy of protection. According to the second provision, a violation of the prohibition of discrimination arises not only when persons in similar positions are treated differently, but also when persons objectively in a different situation are treated identically, both without a reasonable and objective justification.

7 The use of religious apparel is not limited to the Muslim faith. Consider the Roman and Anglican Catholic nuns, who are required to wear a dress that includes a headgear. Or the use of kippah for those who practice the Jewish religion, or dastar (or turban) for the Sikhs, who cannot remove it in public.

8 There is direct discrimination (Article 2.2 (a) of Directive 78/2000) where a person is treated less favorably than others due to his or her political, religious, sexual orientation, disability, etc., or because of his or her political or religious beliefs.

9 Indirect discrimination (Article 2 (2)(b) of Directive 78/2000) occurs when an apparently neutral rule or practice could put persons who profess a particular religion or ideology at a particular disadvantage, provided that it is not objectively justified by a legitimate aim and that the means of achieving it are appropriate and necessary.

1 C. Giust., grande sez., 14 marzo 2017, causa C-157/15, *Achbita e Centrum c. G4S Secure Solutions NV*, accessible at [curia.europa.eu](http://curia.europa.eu)

2 In May 29, 2006, the G4S works council approves an amendment to the internal regulations, which came into force on June 13, 2006, stating that “it is prohibited for employees to wear visible signs of their political, philosophical or religious beliefs at the workplace and/or to manifest any resulting ritual”.

3 In the end, the case goes as far as the Belgian Supreme Court, which asks the European Court of Justice how to interpret the EU directive on equal treatment in employment and occupation (Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000).

4 C. Giust., grande sez., 14 marzo 2017, causa C-188/15, *Bougnaoui e Addh c. Micropole SA*, available at [curia.europa.eu](http://curia.europa.eu)



larism? Contrary to what it might seem, and despite the front-page titles<sup>10</sup> chosen by some news outlets, the Court has not ruled that an ad hoc internal regulation is legal only for the Islamic veil or for Muslim workers. Simply speaking, according to the Court, the rule of a company that prohibits its employees from wearing any political, philosophical or religious signs in a visible manner does not in itself constitute a violation of the principle of equality and non-discrimination,<sup>11</sup> as enshrined in European legislation and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.<sup>12</sup>

Strange but true, a dissenting voice (but not too much), is that of Camillo Langone, who from the pages of the newspaper *Il Giornale* is worried and as a defender of “Christianity” warns: “The ruling of the court threatens any religion and therefore also the Christian one (...) there is the risk that such trials will end badly, that the dismissals for the displaying of crucifixes in the classroom will be upheld. I am sorry to say so, but yet again Brussels has confirmed its usual stance, once more it has failed to acknowledge a certain role to Christianity without which Europe would not even exist (...) as for me, as soon as the heat forces me to leave my tie at home, I will show with renewed pride the cross that I usually wear under

10 Just a few examples: “Vietare il velo al lavoro non è discriminatorio”, and “L’Europa alla guerra del velo (islamico)”, *La Stampa*, March 14, 2017; “Corte di Giustizia Ue: Vietare il velo islamico al lavoro non è discriminazione”, *l’Huffington Post*, March 14, 2017; “Legittimo vietare il velo islamico sul lavoro”, la sentenza Ue che fa discutere l’Europa”, *Corriere della Sera*, March 14, 2017; “I datori di lavoro possono vietare il velo alle dipendenti”, *Il Post*, March 14, 2017. More balanced are for example the titles and contents of the French press: “Voile en entreprise: ce que dit réellement la justice européenne”, *lefigaro.fr*, March 14, 2017; “Pourquoi l’arrêt de la Cour de justice de l’UE sur les signes religieux en entreprise ne change pas grand chose en France”, *huffingtonpost.fr*, March 14, 2017; “Europe: les entreprises peuvent interdire le voile sous conditions”, *lemonde.fr*, March 14, 2017; “Foulard islamique au travail: les dessous de la décision européenne”, *france24.com*, March 14, 2017.

11 According to John Dalhuisen, Director of Amnesty International for Europe and Central Asia, “the European Court of Justice’s disappointing ruling gives employers more freedom of action to discriminate against women – and men – on the basis of religious beliefs”, while “at a time when identity and appearance have become a ground for political confrontation, people need greater protection against prejudice, not less”.

12 In an interesting analysis published on the website of the Open Society Foundation, this decision is labeled as an “illogical judgment, (...) driven by political considerations in a minority of EU states and threatens the coherence of European Union equality law”. According to this article, the ruling pushes legislators and judges to choose between applying a weak approach or ensuring effective protection of religious minorities and defying Islamophobia. See: “EU Top Court Fails to Guarantee Muslim Women’s Right to Wear a Headscarf at Work”, March 15, 2017: [www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/eu-top-court-fails-guarantee-muslim-women-right-wear-headscarf-work](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/eu-top-court-fails-guarantee-muslim-women-right-wear-headscarf-work)

my shirt. I invite other Catholics to do likewise, to give the signal of a presence”.<sup>13</sup>

The European Court’s ruling is therefore inevitably destined to make case law throughout Europe, but precisely because it should be *erga omnes*: an employee who, working in a company that has adopted internal regulations based on the “neutrality” of clothing, wears a crucifix on his neck or other political symbols, could face perfectly legitimate disciplinary measures. Of course, as the Court specifies, it is up to the national courts to determine for each individual case, whether the company rule has been written with clearly discriminatory intent.<sup>14</sup>

However, there is some perplexity whether the freedom to conduct a business is regarded as a “concurrent” right, and therefore on an equal footing, of religious freedom and the freedom to express one’s own identity (also through the veil). It is also striking that in the two judgments the reflection on pluralism and diversity (including religious diversity) disappears completely from the Court’s horizon and that the evaluation of the “conspicuousness” of the religious symbol, through the recognition of a hazy policy of neutrality, is surreptitiously placed in the hands of the employer and his or her clients. The Court thus legitimates the fact that private employers give priority to the wishes of their clients over the fundamental rights of their employees, and compels employees who publicly manifest their faith to carry out only back-office tasks.

Ultimately, the ruling could set a dangerous precedent, which not only endorses discrimination against Muslim women in the workplace, but also helps to legitimize Islamophobia, which is already too widespread.<sup>15</sup>

13 “Attenti, ora qualcuno bandirà il crocifisso”, *Il Giornale*, March 15, 2017.

14 For example, a ruling that points to an opposite direction is the one handed down by the Court of Appeal of Milan, which ruled that the exclusion of a candidate from a selection for a job with duties of hostess a convention determined by the refusal of the candidate to remove her hijab, constitutes direct discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation, since it cannot be considered that the absence of veil constitutes an essential requirement of the service pursuant to art. 3 paragraph 3 d. lgs. 216/2003; as a result, the discriminated person is entitled to compensation for non-pecuniary damage. See *Sentenza del 20 maggio 2016, pres. Vitali, rel. Casella, XXX (avv.ti Guariso e Neri) c. Evolution Events srl (avv.to Bertozzi)*: [www.asgi.it](http://www.asgi.it)

15 The press release issued by Enar (European Network Against Racism) together with other anti-racist organisations available on the network’s site ([enar-eu.org](http://enar-eu.org)) is very significant in this respect: “Forbidding employees from wearing visible signs of their religion treats those employees who wear religious clothing less favourably on grounds of religion. This ruling differentiates between religions which include visible expressions of belief and those which don’t. It will therefore also have an impact on other groups who express their religious beliefs through clothing”. Equally interesting is *We got this covered!*, authored by a group of Muslim women resident in Europe and published on the *opendemocracy.net* website for women’s Day, but taking to the March 14 final ruling: [www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/group-of-muslim-women-from-across-europe/we-got-this-covered](http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/group-of-muslim-women-from-across-europe/we-got-this-covered)

The so-called Islamic “veil” continues therefore to be at the center of public debate and the subject of jurisdictional rulings in Italy and Europe;<sup>16</sup> since it is considered a symbol of female oppression or obstacle to the freedom of enterprise, the possibility that the choice to wear it is the result of a free and independent decision of women is almost never contemplated.

The European Justice system notwithstanding the debate is still open, and has yet to find a balanced “solution” that respects the rights of everyone.

16 On April 20, 2017, just a short time after the European decision, the Court of Milan handed down a ruling rejecting the appeal filed by some associations against a decision of the Lombardy Region prohibiting the so-called Islamic veil in offices and hospitals. The associations asked that the decision be considered “discriminatory”. In the explanatory statement, Judge Martina Flaminio explains that “public security” is “concretely threatened by the impossibility of identifying the many people who enter the public places identified”. In essence, that prohibition is not discriminatory because it is “objectively justified by a legitimate, reasonable and proportionate aim in relation to the value of public security”.

## “Throw around some numbers: nobody checks”

*Giuseppe Faso*

“I tell you why that law is a catastrophe”; from the pages of *Libero*.<sup>1</sup>

Souad Sbai, former Member of Parliament for the center-right, engages in a predictable exercise in the imaginary of “birth tourism”: a well-established and trivial (bipartisan) pursuit. And therefore, the representation of a horde of “thousands of families ready to leave, relatives in tow, in the certainty of easily obtaining advantages such as insertion and easy citizenship”. Let us save the reader the parade of health, social, moral alarms and various calamities created in a conspiracy that sees the government, the “bleeding hearts”, the left, the *Partito Democratico* joining hands. Yet, at least two aspects of Sbai’s article should be mentioned.

The first is the prospect of “exponential growth in an extremely short period of time”, represented as a mortal threat in a country that is actually on the verge of demographic collapse, and now that the flow of immigrants, mostly young workers, is according to official statistics in significant decline risks seeing its population decrease considerably in a few decades. If Sbai had approached the elaborations of those communist “bleeding heart” working at ISTAT and the Bank of Italy, she would have found extremely reassuring, in the face of the ageing of the Italian population, the unfortunately distant prospect of a renewed increase of migratory flows.

But the journalist doesn’t seem to have a good relationship with numbers: explaining that “from where the elites are standing the reality is difficult to see”, she reveals that “for over a year, 60% of the second and third generation girls from Maghreb are denied by their families the possibility to attend compulsory school. Socially isolated they are easy prey of the evil professors of extremism and of radicalization”. According to her doubly obscure conclusion (in the sense it is quite incomprehensible and very alarming), this would be “an integral part of the political project of the Muslim brotherhood”. 60%. Sixty percent. This, give or take, would amount to over 30,000 girls and young women segregated in their home.

Whoever has managed to pick her way through an uncertain syntax, cannot but be left astonished in front of such unfalsifiable (hence hardly credible) apocalyptic scenario. A precise figure is given, but with two limitations that make it difficult to control

1 You can access the article at: [cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=fratucello@arci.it&cod=112017SB2202207001](http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=fratucello@arci.it&cod=112017SB2202207001)

the sources (not declared by Sbai, probably for good reasons): we talk about second and third generation families; and the phenomenon reported refers to "last year".

Given that the numbers of the most detailed statistics, provided in March 2017, date back to the previous school year (2015/2016) compared to the year just finished, and that it is impossible to separate second- and third-generation households from the first-generation (whatever that means), it is impossible to prove that the figure given by Sbai is false. The power of the approximate, imaginary, the utterly invented, ideological blindness or of any other motivation for providing data that cannot be checked, and therefore cannot be denied because they cannot be proved. And which, as far as we know, are unrealistic.

The data contained in the publication of the Ministry of Education *Gli alunni stranieri nel sistema scolastico italiano 2015/2016*,<sup>2</sup> easily reachable by everyone, give a very detailed idea of the numbers of non-Italian pupils enrolled. But the data does not distinguish males from females, and there are no references to the overall population in order to be able to calculate the percentage of possibly segregated females.

Luckily, there is a publication by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.<sup>3</sup> Here, too, we are talking about detailed and reliable data, though they still refer to 2016. Here, on page 36, we learn that females account for 47.9% of the total number of Moroccan citizens enrolled in schools, and are proportionally distributed for each educational level: exactly the same percentage reported on page 32, concerning the ratio of females to the total number of minors coming from Morocco. The percentage of females enrolled in schools is slightly higher than the percentage that concerns all females of non-Italian citizenship, 47.6%. How can we understand from these numbers if a certain percentage of girls and young women (sixty percent!) are not enrolled in school? We should have at our disposal the age groups from five to nineteen, we should get the sum of the females of those groups and compare it with those enrolled in school: that should turn out to be a little less due to school dropout.

However, there is a lack of information on age groups at a national level. For a reliable estimate, we used the data of a sample monitored for 22 years in central Tuscany. The results are as follows: in the sample, Moroccan females aged between five and nineteen accounts for 67.77% of children enrolled in the civil registry (data updated as of January 1, 2017); school enrollment here is slightly higher; due to a lack of drop-outs, some schools' delays and the presence of girls that do not yet hold a residence

permit. At the same time, it should be noted that boys enrolled in school are less than the proportion of boys enrolled in this sample. If we apply, for an analogical simulation, this percentage to the 2016 national data, we have: underage females enrolled in the registry office 77,274. Estimate of females between five and nineteen: about 52,000. Enrolled in school: 48,934. There are 3,425 inscriptions missing, 6.4% of the total: a physiological quota, lower than those recorded for other groups. For males, this difference is 5.5%, and also this is consistent with other data concerning other boys that do not come from Morocco. This is a simulation, which allows us to make an estimate which, in turn, *is not contradicted by the analysis of previous years*. Based on this estimate, it is difficult to imagine mass segregation at home. To reach 60% of the segregated females, more than 30,000 of those enrolled should be missing. There are two possibilities: either in the last year there has been a nationwide collapse of enrollments of girls from Morocco, yet to be registered by the Ministry but known to Mrs. Souad Sbai, or we are dealing with the technique recommended by Don Silvano a character of the novel *I buoni* by Luca Rastello (Chiarelettere, Rome 2013): "If you don't know what to say, throw around some numbers... they convince everyone, and nobody checks".

We have checked, based on data in our possession updated in January 2017 and concerning a significant sample of municipalities, school enrollment, by nationality and gender: in our sample girls of Moroccan citizenship enrolled are more than the boys, a slight increase compared to last year, and above all fully consistent with the data regarding the relevant age groups (we have chosen those between 4 and 19). On the contrary, in some cases, there are more students enrolled at school than those enrolled at the registry office, for reasons that are well-known to those who look at these phenomena in an effort to understand them.

These numbers are not official yet, and we do not want to generalize their import: but they confirm our view of the total unreliability of the alleged information provided by Sbai, and they increase our dismay at the clumsy uses of unsubstantiated figures to induce alarm, the least we can say is that they do not help us to understand what we are talking about.

Having said that, we can expect that unreliable data such as these will keep on being circulated in the near future. It would not be the first time.<sup>4</sup> And this might well mean something.

2 This report can be accessed here: [www.istruzione.it/allegati/2017/Notiziario\\_alunni\\_Stranieri\\_nel%20sistema\\_scolastico\\_italiano\\_15\\_16.pdf](http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2017/Notiziario_alunni_Stranieri_nel%20sistema_scolastico_italiano_15_16.pdf)

3 *La comunità marocchina in Italia. Rapporto annuale sulla presenza dei migranti. 2016*, accessible at: [www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Aretematiche/PaesiComunitari-e-associazioniMigranti/Documents/RAPPORTI\\_COMUNITA\\_2016/RC\\_MAROCCO\\_DEF.pdf](http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Aretematiche/PaesiComunitari-e-associazioniMigranti/Documents/RAPPORTI_COMUNITA_2016/RC_MAROCCO_DEF.pdf)

4 On the same day Sbai's article was published, for example, Milena Gabanelli reports figures into circulation by Salvini that went viral: "in the last few months 90% are not asylum seekers". See "Le Ong possono forzare i blocchi negli altri porti" (sic), *Corriere della Sera*: [www.corriere.it/opinioni/17\\_luglio\\_14/ong-possono-forzare-10200d7a-67e8-11e7-b139-307c48369751.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/opinioni/17_luglio_14/ong-possono-forzare-10200d7a-67e8-11e7-b139-307c48369751.shtml). See the detailed reply by Filippo Miraglia, "Approdo sbagliato, stavolta, per Gabanelli", *il manifesto*, July 16, 2017: [ilmanifesto.it/approdo-sbagliato-stavolta-per-gabanelli/](http://ilmanifesto.it/approdo-sbagliato-stavolta-per-gabanelli/)

## NGOs: darkness at the end of the tunnel

*Grazia Naletto*

And now there are no rescue ships off the coast of Libya.

Departures have decreased, there is no doubt, but people have not disappeared. We simply do no longer see them. For now, we see nothing more about what is happening at sea, within 100 miles of the Libyan coast. And we do not see what is happening on the ground, in Libya, in the prisons we are forcing men, women and children to go back to, into the corrupt and violent hell which they hoped they had left behind. Even if in order to do so they had to sail aboard a ramshackle dinghy that would have probably not gone very far. They had chosen a probable death to escape a certain death. We have chosen to bring them back.<sup>1</sup>

Today we know for sure. The lives of thousands of women, men and children are worth nothing. They can be violated, tortured and even die: the important thing is that they are far from our eyes. We will “assist them in their own home countries”, not really. Through cooperation with the Ministries of Interior of Niger, Chad and Libya, we will prevent them from crossing the southern Libyan border. We will train the Libyan coastguard to seal the northern coasts of the country. We will fund appalling detention centers to detain both those who will manage to escape controls at the southern border and those who will be stopped and arrested at sea and brought back.

Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children and Sea Eye have so far stopped search and rescue operations at sea; the German ship *Jugen Rettet's* *Iuventia*, subject to an investigation, is anchored at the port of Trapani. And on mid-August, a few hours after the Italian Minister of the Interior declared that he saw “a light at the end of the tunnel”, the vessel *Golfo Azzurro* of the Spanish NGO *Proactiva Open Arms* was threatened and seized for two hours by Libyan coastguards while in international waters.

This is the situation at the time of writing; a lot will probably happen in the coming days, in the context of what can be called one of the largest mass dis-

1 See: Cataldi V., “Il codice di distrazione di massa. Ovvero dell’arte di accusare le Ong per nascondere l’inferno dove rimandare i migranti”, August 11, 2017, *Articolo 21*: [www.articolo21.org/2017/08/il-codice-di-distrazione-di-massa-ovvero-dellarte-di-accusare-le-ong-per-nascondere-linferno-dove-rimandare-i-migranti/](http://www.articolo21.org/2017/08/il-codice-di-distrazione-di-massa-ovvero-dellarte-di-accusare-le-ong-per-nascondere-linferno-dove-rimandare-i-migranti/)

traction campaigns waged in our country to stop humanitarian intervention in favor of migrants and asylum seekers. The criminalization of NGOs involved in the SAR operations to rescue migrants at sea could be studied in journalism schools as an example of a smear campaign that has succeeded in monopolizing the public and media debate for months, on the basis of false, partial, omitted or manipulated news, involving a variety of public and private actors: first of all, of course, the members of the Government, but also representatives of the Judiciary (some more vocal than others); Parliament; the European Coast Border and Coast Guard Agency *Frontex*, the national intelligence agencies and the various civil and military security forces; the mainstream national press, bloggers of various kinds and private security agencies, to the point of reaching anyone on social networks who feels entitled to take sides on any issue whatsoever.

The speed and gravity of events is such that our reconstruction will be inevitably partial and incomplete. But not talking about it would mean becoming complicit in what a pundit who is more authoritative and less radical than us has correctly defined a “moral inversion”.<sup>2</sup>

### Trapani’s inquiry: what we know today

On August 2, 2017, the State Police, on the request of the Public Prosecutor of Trapani, stopped off coast of Lampedusa the ship *Iuventa* owned by the NGO *Jugen Rettet*, took it to port and ordered its judicial seizure. The offense is to abet illegal immigration. It appears that in at least three cases, there is evidence of contacts between the ship’s personnel and traffickers during rescue activities carried out near the Libyan coast without an imminent threat to life. The justices themselves, who are signatories to the order of seizure, rule out the existence of any form of criminal association between the German NGO and the traffickers: the responsibilities would only be individual and motivated by humanitarian aims.<sup>3</sup>

The investigation was launched in October 2016 in response to a report by two employees of the private security company *Imi Security Service*, on board *Save*

2 See Mauro E., “L’inversione morale”, *La Repubblica*, August 9, 2017: [www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/08/09/news/l\\_inversione\\_morale-172679630/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/08/09/news/l_inversione_morale-172679630/)

3 For a detailed reconstruction of the charges and doubts raised by some lawyers and legal experts, see: Palladino A., “I magistrati sulla nave fermata: ‘Le finalità della *Iuventa* erano umanitarie, non criminali””, *Famigliacristiana.it*, August 3, 2017, [www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/iuventa-la-nave-fermata-della-ong-tedesca-ma-il-gip-commenta-ma-anche-le-ong-militanti-non-sono-criminali.aspx](http://www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/iuventa-la-nave-fermata-della-ong-tedesca-ma-il-gip-commenta-ma-anche-le-ong-militanti-non-sono-criminali.aspx) and Camilli A., “Tutte le accuse alla ong *Jugend Rettet*”, *Internazionale.it*, August 8, 2017: [www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/08/08/accuse-ong-iuventa-jugend-rettet](http://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/08/08/accuse-ong-iuventa-jugend-rettet)



the Children's Vox Hestia;<sup>4</sup> according to them the German NGO's ship offered "logistical support to the traffickers in picking migrants directly from the boats driven by said traffickers, facilitating their embarkation on boats operated by other NGOs". The two private operators would actually have reported anomalies to the AISE (Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Esterna) already in *September 2016*. Following the interrogation of the two contractors on 14 October, the Public Prosecutor's Office ordered telephone interceptions on the mobile phones of the two private security officers and aid workers. On *May 15, 2017*, an undercover agent of the SCO (Servizio Operativo Centrale) boards Vos Hestia. He will remain on board until the end of June. On August 2, on the basis of the data collected, the Juventia is seized. Incredibly among those targeted by investigation is also Don Mussie Zerai, an Eritrean priest who for years has been a point of reference for migrants departing from the Horn of Africa: his reports have made it possible to save thousands of people.<sup>5</sup>

Let us start from the (provisional) end because it gives a new perspective on what happened in the previous months.

## Prologue

*The Financial Times* of December 15, 2016, an article written by the Brussels correspondent, mentions two Frontex 'confidential' reports which suggest that there is cooperation between NGOs in the central Mediterranean and human traffickers: "migrants have apparently received clear indications before departure on the precise direction to follow in order to reach the NGOs' ships".<sup>6</sup> *The Financial Times* article is taken up in Italy by some media, but it goes unnoticed.<sup>7</sup>

4 See Sarzanini F, "Io, poliziotto infiltrato a bordo Così ho filmato trafficanti e Ong", *Il Corriere della Sera*, August 4, 2017, [cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=042017VE6501008002](http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=042017VE6501008002)

5 In support of Don Mussie Zerai, many people and associations immediately pronounced themselves, see here the appeal promoted by A-dif *Chi denuncia Don Mussie infanga ognunalo di noi*: [www.a-dif.org/2017/08/12/chi-denuncia-don-mussie-infanga-ognunalo-di-noi/](http://www.a-dif.org/2017/08/12/chi-denuncia-don-mussie-infanga-ognunalo-di-noi/)

6 "Frontex put its concerns in a confidential report last month, raising the idea that migrants had been given 'clear indications before departure on the precise direction to be followed in order to reach the NGOs' boats'. The agency also raised concerns in another report last week, which stated: 'First reported case where the criminal networks were smuggling migrants directly on an NGO vessel.'" See Robinson D, "EU border force flags concerns over charities' interaction with migrant smugglers", *Financial Times*, December 15, 2016: [www.ft.com/content/3e6b6450-c1f7-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354](http://www.ft.com/content/3e6b6450-c1f7-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354)

7 See among others, Ansa ([www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/rubriche/altrenews/2016/12/16/migranti-frontex-accusa-ong-in-combutta-con-trafficanti\\_fa75879c-e84d-4bb8-9881-7338db1113df.html](http://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/rubriche/altrenews/2016/12/16/migranti-frontex-accusa-ong-in-combutta-con-trafficanti_fa75879c-e84d-4bb8-9881-7338db1113df.html)), Asknews ([www.asknews.it/esteri/2016/12/15/migranti-ft-frontex-accusa-ong-di-col-](http://www.asknews.it/esteri/2016/12/15/migranti-ft-frontex-accusa-ong-di-col-lusione-con-trafficanti-pn_20161215_00027/)

On February 17, 2017, the Public Prosecutor of Catania Carmelo Zuccaro announced to the daily *la Repubblica* the start of an investigation,<sup>8</sup> only in the following days will he clarify that this is a non-judicial investigation.

The news appears two days after Frontex's submission of the *Risk Analysis Report for 2017*<sup>9</sup> to the European Union. According to the Agency, between June and October 2016, a significant number of vessels with migrants on board were identified or rescued by NGOs' ships without a distress call and in the absence of official information regarding their location. In essence, Frontex establishes a causal link between the growth of the operations carried out by NGOs, the number of accidents and deaths at sea and the tactical change of traffickers, arguing that "both border surveillance and SAR missions close to, or within, the 12-mile territorial waters of Libya have unintended consequences. Namely, they influence smugglers' planning and act as a pull factor that compounds the difficulties inherent in border control and saving lives at sea". According to the European agency, "All parties involved in SAR operations in the Central Mediterranean unintentionally help criminals achieve their objectives at minimum cost, strengthen their business model by increasing the chances of success."

In Italy the report is picked up by Agi and *La Stampa* on March 15. The Turin daily titled: "NGO ships under accusation. Used as a taxi by traffickers". Just as the Agi press agency, the article brings the definition of NGOs as "migrants' taxis" back to the report published by Frontex. The news will only be corrected by the press agency on April 24, more than a month after the fact, on the basis of "a report from a reader".<sup>10</sup> The Frontex Report does not use this term, which has very different origins.

On March 10, the tv show *Striscia la notizia* shows the video shot by a blogger, 23 year-old Luca Donavel, a student in Communication, entitled "The Truth about Migrants". Donavel, through the analysis of the satellite surveys of the routes of the rescue ships carried out by a website, "reveals" that they are all directed at the same point, a few kilometers off the Libyan coast, and wonders why

lusione-con-trafficanti-pn\_20161215\_00027/) and the daily *Avvenire* ([www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/collusione-coi-trafficanti-di-morte-frontex-attacca-le-ong-bufera](http://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/collusione-coi-trafficanti-di-morte-frontex-attacca-le-ong-bufera)).

8 See F. Viviano, A. Ziniti, "Contatti con scafisti, indagine sulle Ong", *la Repubblica*, February 17, 2017: [ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/02/17/contatti-con-scafisti-indagine-sulle-ong15.html](http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/02/17/contatti-con-scafisti-indagine-sulle-ong15.html)

9 See Frontex, Risk analysis report for 2017, pp. 32-33, accessible at: [frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Annual\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2017.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2017.pdf)

10 See Agi, "Cosa Frontex contesta alle Ong impegnate nei soccorsi del Mediterraneo", March 15, 2017: [www.agi.it/cronaca/2017/03/15/news/perch\\_frontex\\_accusa\\_le\\_ong\\_di\\_fare\\_da\\_taxi\\_per\\_gli\\_scafisti-1586576/](http://www.agi.it/cronaca/2017/03/15/news/perch_frontex_accusa_le_ong_di_fare_da_taxi_per_gli_scafisti-1586576/)

the NGOs all head to Sicily instead of taking the rescued migrants to the nearest port, that of Zarzis in Tunisia. It is he who speaks of “sea taxi” and the editors do not hesitate, in the introductory segment, to speak of “take-away refugees”.<sup>11</sup>

The video goes viral.

### Zuccaro's statements

The most aggressive campaign starts in mid-March following statements made by the Catania Public Prosecutor Carmelo Zuccaro, which to a large extent echo the arguments laid out by Frontex, but add doubts regarding the origins of NGOs' funding.

The Prosecutor's Office is audited beforehand, on March 22, by the Parliamentary Monitoring Committee on the implementation of the Schengen Agreement, which supervises Europol's activities, immigration control and surveillance. On May 3, he reports to the Senate Defense Commission.

In the first case, Zuccaro clarifies that the investigation he initiated originated from the observation of “a sudden increase in the number of rescue vessels operated by NGO (13 ships detected). The monthly or daily costs faced by these NGOs are indeed high” and notes that “These vessels (...) sometimes operate within Libyan territory. In any case, they almost always operate in international waters, just in the immediate border of Libyan territory”.<sup>12</sup> Evoking what Frontex has written in its report, he notes an “incredible” number of landings, and stresses the very high number of people at sea in 2016 and 2017 and continues:

People at the helm of these boats are increasingly incompetent. By now, they are no longer part of the trafficking organization, not even at a low level. We are talking about people who are chosen at the last minute from among the migrants themselves, who are given a compass, possibly, who are given a satellite phone, possibly, and they are told to follow a certain route, and sooner or later *it is certain that – this is what they are told – an NGO will help them.*

It would seem that the presence of NGOs would cause “*a setback to the activities of traffickers*”. The *fact-finding* investigation initiated by the Procura di Catania, Zuccaro explains, is therefore aimed at investigating the sources of NGOs' fund-

ing and whether they cooperate with the police and judicial authorities. On the most delicate point that is at the center of media coverage (the direct contact between NGOs and traffickers) he admits that there is no evidence:

I am convinced that it was not always the center of operations that called the NGOs. I believe that, since the contact points with NGOs can also be deduced from open sources – if we go on the Internet, we can also find telephone numbers and contact numbers for these NGOs – *how can we rule out that they have been called directly? This has not been proven, but it has not been ruled out either.* (...) It is possible to start from the worst-case scenario, which is that of a conscious agreement that could have been reached between the NGOs and such organizations. This, which is certainly the worst-case scenario, *has not been proven at the moment, but it is obvious that we are working on it.*

The hearing of the Prosecutor at the Senate Defense Commission, which on 28 March launched a fact-finding inquiry “on the contribution of Italian military personnel in the control of migratory flows in the Mediterranean and the impact of the activities of non-governmental organizations”, follows a similar script, but the tenor of the accusations worsens:<sup>13</sup>

From data that cannot be used for legal purposes, it appears that there are contacts between the Libyan mainland and private operators at sea to define in advance the point where the rescue will take place. *These relations are decidedly unclear* and would also require an in-depth investigation beyond the strictly judicial sphere.

From here Zuccaro proposes to introduce the possibility of intercepting satellite communications; and notes that “*the phenomenon has an important economic impact also in Italy*, where a phenomenon of hoarding of resources for reception centers is underway” and reiterates that:

As far as NGOs are concerned, there are some *elements of suspicion* that lead to working hypotheses, which consist of *funding from subjects with purposes other than humanitarian ones and partly from the traffickers themselves*, which *to date have no evidence* but suggest the opportunity to carry out investigative activities.

Zuccaro reiterates that there is no evidence to support his assertions that “they are a preliminary with respect to a future criminal investigation”.

11 The segment is still accessible today: [www.video.mediaset.it/video/striscialanotizia/servizio/profughi-take-away\\_698898.html](http://www.video.mediaset.it/video/striscialanotizia/servizio/profughi-take-away_698898.html)

12 See Camera dei Deputati, *Resoconto stenografico della seduta n. 41 del 22 marzo 2017*, accessible at: [documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/html/30/indag/c30\\_confini/2017/03/22/indice\\_stenografico.0041.html](http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/commissioni/stenografici/html/30/indag/c30_confini/2017/03/22/indice_stenografico.0041.html)

13 See Commissione Difesa del Senato, *Resoconto della seduta n. 227 del 3 maggio 2017*, accessible at: [www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=SommComm&leg=17&id=1021969](http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=SommComm&leg=17&id=1021969)

The Defense Commission confirms in the final document of the investigation, published on May 16, 2017, that there are no ongoing investigations against non-governmental organizations as such and that it became aware of a single “investigation by the Trapani Public Prosecutor’s Office concerning, inter alia, individuals involved in operations”.<sup>14</sup> It is the inquiry of which only on 2 August, as we have already said, more details will be known.

### Public debate: which side are you on?

Meanwhile, the “sea taxis” have crossed the web and already undermined the credibility of the NGOs. The post on Facebook of the vice-president of the Chamber Luigi Di Maio, who takes up an article of his leader, bounces from one newspaper to another: “Who pays for these Mediterranean taxis? And why do they do it? We will be tabling a question in Parliament, we will go to the bottom of this story and we hope that Minister Minniti will tell us everything he knows. A pounding media campaign helps instill in the public the idea that behind the activities of NGOs there is something “dark” and “illegal”.<sup>15</sup> It sums up well the changed attitude of the media, after this event, Carta di Roma, in a Report dedicated to the representation of SAR operations offered in the media:

With the video of a blogger who first went viral and then with the statements of the Attorney of Catania Carmelo Zuccaro, the frame from positive becomes negative: a shadow is cast on the work of NGOs. This ushers in a new phase in SAR’s story: the work of the organizations that carry out these missions is questioned, to the point of doubting the humanitarian spirit that animates them. Suspicion now prevails.<sup>16</sup>

If there is no lack of journalistic rumors that carefully reconstruct the ambi-

14 See Commissione Difesa del Senato, *Documento approvato dalla 4a Commissione permanente a conclusione dell’indagine conoscitiva sul contributo dei militari italiani al controllo dei flussi migratori nel Mediterraneo e l’impatto delle attività delle organizzazioni non governative*, seduta del 16 maggio 2017, accessible at: [www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/dossier/file\\_internets/000/002/115/doc\\_XVII\\_n\\_9.pdf](http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/dossier/file_internets/000/002/115/doc_XVII_n_9.pdf)

15 It is impossible to cite all of them because all the main national newspapers have written about it. Those who wish to go into more detail can consult the daily press review carried out by Carta di Roma: the period of greater concentration of articles on the topic is between March 15 and May 3, 2017.

16 See Cospe, Carta di Roma, Osservatorio di Pavia, *Navigare a vista. Il racconto delle operazioni di ricerca e soccorso di migranti nel Mediterraneo centrale*, May 2017, available here: [www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/rappresentazione-delle-operazioni-di-soccorso-di-migranti-e-rifugiati-nei-media/](http://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/rappresentazione-delle-operazioni-di-soccorso-di-migranti-e-rifugiati-nei-media/)

guities and falsehoods conveyed on the SAR operations managed by NGOs, the dominant frame, in the titles and contents of articles and reports, is of the sort that casts shadows and doubts on the organizations by suggesting that they are engaged in “illegal operations”.<sup>17</sup>

All this happens despite the fact that several institutional sources deny the existence of evidence to support the collaboration between NGOs and traffickers. On April 27 the European Commission itself declared, in the person of the first vice-president Frans Timmermans, that “There is no evidence that NGOs work with criminal organizations to help migrants enter the European Union illegally”.

In the days that follow, the Italian Government intervenes, even if somewhat ambiguously. Minister Minniti urges to “avoid generalizations and hasty judgments, keeping to a rigorous evaluation of the acts”. Minister Orlando and Minister Alfano argue with each other, one by urging to make reference to the investigations, the other by siding with Procurator Zuccaro. The President of the Council of Minister tries to soften the tones: “The work of NGOs is valuable and welcome”. Are there any shady dealings? The judiciary will investigate. Volunteers who save lives “are welcome”.<sup>18</sup>

The attack on humanitarian organizations is so violent that, in addition to the NGOs themselves, many voices within the media and cultural community feel obliged to react. Such is the case of Roberto Saviano, who enters into direct controversy with the Hon. Di Maio pointing out that the criminalization of NGOs and rescue operations by the 5 Star Movement is instrumental to the objective of achieving electoral consensus.<sup>19</sup> It is also the case of excellent journalists and activists who carefully follow the evolution of the situation and give voice to the organizations in order to dismantle point by point the thesis of a plot between NGO and traffickers of death.<sup>20</sup>

17 See for example Mario Longoni, “Le navi umanitarie provocano più morti”. The author also writes about “salvataggio a domicilio” in *Italia Oggi*, March 15, 2017: [www.italiaoggi.it/giornali/dettaglio\\_giornali.asp?preview=false&accessMode=FA&id=2163328&codiciTestate=1&titolo=Le%20navi%20umanitarie%20provocano%20pi%20migranti%20morti](http://www.italiaoggi.it/giornali/dettaglio_giornali.asp?preview=false&accessMode=FA&id=2163328&codiciTestate=1&titolo=Le%20navi%20umanitarie%20provocano%20pi%20migranti%20morti)

18 A summary of political, not only governmental, positions in a press release by Ansa on May 30: [www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2017/04/29/migranti-gentiloni-ong-preziose-ma-magistratura-vada-avanti-\\_73fc2047-b04d-4d89-8c00-10e8a168ac04.html](http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2017/04/29/migranti-gentiloni-ong-preziose-ma-magistratura-vada-avanti-_73fc2047-b04d-4d89-8c00-10e8a168ac04.html)

19 See R. Saviano, “Perché difendo le Ong”, *la Repubblica*, April 25, 2017: [www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/04/25/news/saviano\\_di\\_maio\\_ong\\_profughi\\_grillo\\_fonti\\_verificare-163814109/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/04/25/news/saviano_di_maio_ong_profughi_grillo_fonti_verificare-163814109/)

20 See for example: D. Padoan, “Perché danno fastidio le Ong che salvano i migranti in mare”, *Adif*, March 9, 2017: [www.a-dif.org/2017/03/09/perche-danno-fastidio-le-ong-che-salvano-i-migranti-in-mare/](http://www.a-dif.org/2017/03/09/perche-danno-fastidio-le-ong-che-salvano-i-migranti-in-mare/); A. Camilli, “Perché le ong che salvano vite nel Mediterraneo sono sotto attacco”, *Internazionale*, April 22, 2017: [www.internazionale.it/notizie/annali-](http://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annali-)



On their part, humanitarian organizations reiterate that their ships have always operated under the coordination of the Coast Guard operational center in Rome and only with its authorization have they moved into international and Libyan waters. The available data do not show any evidence of the link between their presence in the Mediterranean, the increase in departures and the number of deaths at sea. None of the organizations involved has ever interrupted the transponders' connection that tracks the position of ships at sea. There is no evidence corroborating a collaboration with the traffickers. The costs of their missions are high, but fully compatible with the type of action carry out. So far, no suspicious financing has been identified "aimed at destabilizing the economy of the region".

As some activists clearly explain,<sup>21</sup> migrants depart on inflatable dinghies because the EunavforMed mission has, among other things, the task to destroy the iron and wooden ships traffickers use. The impact of SAR missions performed by humanitarian organizations has increased considerably because military vessels in the area stay back close to the island of Malta and are more rarely involved. People are brought to Italy because the nearest Tunisian port *is not a safe port*, as it does not guarantee the right to seek asylum and to obtain decent accommodation.

The NGOs' political response, at a press conference on May 2, 2017,<sup>22</sup> is very precise: the campaign of de-legitimization of relief operations aims to remove unwanted witnesses from the Mediterranean and Libya. Responsibility for risky travel, the development of the shameful business of traffickers and thousands of victims in central Mediterranean is primarily the responsibility of the European

sa-camilli/2017/04/22/ong-criminalizzazione-mediterraneo; L. M. Alvaro, "Ong, come nasce una fake news", *Vita*, April 28, 2017: [www.vita.it/it/article/2017/04/28/ong-come-nasce-una-fake-news/143181/](http://www.vita.it/it/article/2017/04/28/ong-come-nasce-una-fake-news/143181/); R. Gonnelli, "Blogger, ultra-euro alle origini della fake news sulle ong", *il manifesto*, April 28, 2017: [ilmanifesto.it/blogger-ultra-euro-allorigine-della-fake-news-sulle-ong/](http://ilmanifesto.it/blogger-ultra-euro-allorigine-della-fake-news-sulle-ong/); S. Chiodo, "Le Ong sotto attacco: 'Noi sostituti della politica, si faccia chiarezza'. Procuratore di Siracusa: 'Nessun collegamento'", *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, May 2, 2017: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ong-soccorsi-mare-trafficienti-procuratore-siracusa/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ong-soccorsi-mare-trafficienti-procuratore-siracusa/); A. Camilli, "Come difendersi dagli attacchi alla solidarietà", *Internazionale*, May 15, 2017: [www.internazionale.it/bloc-notes/annalisa-camilli/2017/05/15/ong-migranti-solidarieta-attacchi](http://www.internazionale.it/bloc-notes/annalisa-camilli/2017/05/15/ong-migranti-solidarieta-attacchi); F. Floris e L. Bagnoli, "Accuse alle Ong: cosa c'è di falso o di sviante", *Open Migration*, May 10, 2017 [openmigration.org/analisi/accuse-alle-ong-cosa-ce-di-falso-o-di-sviante/](http://openmigration.org/analisi/accuse-alle-ong-cosa-ce-di-falso-o-di-sviante/)

21 Among the many important articles on the subject by Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo, see: Vassallo Paleologo F., "Accordi tra Italia e Libia e respingimenti collettivi in acque internazionali. Cosa si nasconde dietro la criminalizzazione delle Organizzazioni non governative", *A-dif.org*, May 14, 2017, [www.a-dif.org/2017/05/14/accordi-tra-italia-e-libia-e-respingimenti-collettivi-in-acque-internazionali-cosa-si-nasconde-dietro-la-criminalizzazione-delle-organizzazioni-non-governative/](http://www.a-dif.org/2017/05/14/accordi-tra-italia-e-libia-e-respingimenti-collettivi-in-acque-internazionali-cosa-si-nasconde-dietro-la-criminalizzazione-delle-organizzazioni-non-governative/)

22 For a summary, see: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ong-soccorsi-mare-trafficienti-procuratore-siracusa/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ong-soccorsi-mare-trafficienti-procuratore-siracusa/)

Union and its member states, which refuse to establish legal entry channels for economic migrants and humanitarian corridors for potential asylum seekers.

The release of the Defense Commission report in mid-May seems to put an end to the controversy. But that is not the case.

### Only the C-Star is welcome

In June, the number of landings reached a new peak: the Italian government is seeking solidarity from other European countries to no avail. At the July 6 and 7 Summit in Tallinn, which brings together the Ministers of the Interior, the umpteenth "operational plan" to stop migration flows is discussed. The Italian Government, which has threatened the closure of Italian ports to foreign NGOs and has proposed to amend the mandate of the *Triton* mission and divert incoming ships to French and Spanish ports, receives a clear refusal from European partners and only consent to the drafting of a new code of conduct for NGOs providing assistance at sea. The proposal clearly implies that the code already adopted by most NGOs is not sufficient.<sup>23</sup> Hence, NGOs are once again the scapegoats for the failings of the Italian Government on other fronts and this in turn legitimizes its concomitant initiatives of cooperation with Libya and other compliant African countries, which have one only objective: to stop the arrivals of migrants at all costs. The text,<sup>24</sup> signed to date by four NGOs,<sup>25</sup> commits them not to enter into the Libyan territorial waters "except in situations of serious and imminent danger" and not to hinder the activity carried out by the Libyan Coast Guard; to regularly transmit their identification signals; not to "make communications or send light signals to facilitate the departure and embarkation of vessels carrying migrants"; not to equip themselves with appropriate personnel and technical means and to communicate them to the Commission. Among the most controversial points that have led, for example Doctors Without Borders not to sign it is the commitment to accept the presence of police officers on board at the request of the competent Italian authorities; the prohibition to transfer rescued migrants on other ships when not requested by the MRCC. But, above all, according to the humanitarian organization, the code

23 Cf. *Voluntary Code of Conduct for Search and Rescue Operations Undertaken by Civil Society Non-Government Organisations in the Mediterranean Sea*, February 2017, [www.humanrightsatsea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/20170302-NGO-Code-of-Conduct-FINAL-SECURED.pdf](http://www.humanrightsatsea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/20170302-NGO-Code-of-Conduct-FINAL-SECURED.pdf)

24 That can be accessed at: [www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/codice\\_condotta\\_ong.pdf](http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/codice_condotta_ong.pdf)

25 These are Migrant offshore aid station (Moas) and Save the Children (July 31), Proactiva Open Arms (August 8) e Sos Méditerranée (August 1).



Does not state with sufficient clarity the priority of rescue at sea, does not recognize the contribution provided by humanitarian organizations and, above all, does not propose to introduce specific measures aimed primarily at strengthening the search and rescue system.<sup>26</sup>

These are the same days in which the Public Prosecutor's Office in Trapani orders the seizure of the ship *Iuventia*: a timing which contributes to further increase the divide within civil society between the supporters of the Minister and his detractors, between those in favor or against MSF and NGOs. This occurs also with the contribution of some journalists, including authoritative ones, who urge their readers to take sides.<sup>27</sup> Luckily, many side with MSF,<sup>28</sup> but the damage is now done. The worsening of security conditions leads Doctors Without Borders (August 12) and Save the Children and Sea Eye (August 13) to temporarily suspend SAR missions. Such suspensions are motivated by the Libyan Government's decision to arbitrarily establish its own SAR zone up to 97 miles from the coast and to prohibit access to it for foreign vessels that have not previously requested it is the basis of this choice. Operating in the area is also risky for the NGOs that signed the agreement, as confirmed by the seizure of the *Blue Gulf* and the threats of the Libyan Coast Guard directed at *Proactiva Open Arms* on August 15.

The Ministry of the Interior has chosen to entrust the task of blocking the central Mediterranean route to this kind of coast guard, one that opens fire against migrants and those who help them against which the International Criminal Court has opened an investigation for "crimes against humanity".<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime, only anti-racist activists from Catania and Tunisian countries<sup>30</sup> stand in the way of *C-Star*, the boat of the extreme right-wing suprema-

cist movement *Generazione Identitaria*, chartered through a fund-raising campaign promoted by the *defendeurope.net* website with *the aim of boycott rescue operations at sea*.

Today, there are fewer ships in the central Mediterranean and, as some UN experts denounce, the rescue system developed in the Mediterranean, of which the Code of Conduct for NGOs is part, "risks leading to an increase in the number of deaths" among migrants while violating their human rights".<sup>31</sup>

At the end of the tunnel, the darkness is getting deeper and deeper.

26 See. "Msf, Codice di condotta: perché Msf non ha firmato", at: [www.medicisenzafrontiere.it/notizie/news/codice-di-condotta-perche-msf-non-ha-firmato](http://www.medicisenzafrontiere.it/notizie/news/codice-di-condotta-perche-msf-non-ha-firmato)

27 Bonini C. "Buoni e cattivi di una catastrofe umanitaria", *La Repubblica*, August 3, 2017, accessible at: [cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=032017VE7400108002](http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=032017VE7400108002)

28 See., Mauro E., cit.; Giovannini M., "Il silenzio della sinistra", *La Repubblica*, August 7, 2017, [www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/08/07/news/il\\_silenzio\\_della\\_sinistra-172556287/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/08/07/news/il_silenzio_della_sinistra-172556287/); Saviano R., "Il j'accuse di Saviano: 'La Sinistra che non difende i più deboli smarrisce se stessa'", *L'Espresso*, August 14, 2017, [espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/08/10/news/j-accuse-roberto-saviano-1.307832?ref=HEF\\_RULLO&ncid=fcbklnkithpimg00000001](http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/08/10/news/j-accuse-roberto-saviano-1.307832?ref=HEF_RULLO&ncid=fcbklnkithpimg00000001)

29 See., Fassini D., Scavo N., "Migranti. La Corte dell'Aja indaga sulla Guardia costiera libica: 'Gravi crimini'", *Avvenire.it*, July 1, 2017, accessible at: [www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/l-aja-accusa-la-guardia-costiera-libica](http://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/l-aja-accusa-la-guardia-costiera-libica)

30 In Catania, anti-racists staged a protest on July 29, 2017 when *C-Star* was to arrive in the

port. Cf., [catania.livesicilia.it/2017/07/29/la-protesta-contro-l-arrivo-della-c-star-porto-aperto-per-rifugiati-e-migranti\\_426930/](http://catania.livesicilia.it/2017/07/29/la-protesta-contro-l-arrivo-della-c-star-porto-aperto-per-rifugiati-e-migranti_426930/); in Zarzis and Sfax activists and fishermen held a demonstration on August 6 and 7, 2017. Cf., Gonnelli R., "Pescatori tunisini cacciano la nera *C-Star*", *il manifesto*, August 8, 2017, [ilmanifesto.it/pescatori-tunisini-cacciano-la-nave-nera-c-star/](http://ilmanifesto.it/pescatori-tunisini-cacciano-la-nave-nera-c-star/)

31 See "L'Onu contro il Codice: rischio aumento delle morti", *il manifesto*, August 18, 2017: [cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=182017SB2508008001](http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=182017SB2508008001)

## Chronicles of ordinary racism

## The overflowing racism of 4.0 era

Grazia Naletto

### Premise

“I’ll make you have an abortion, you f... nigger”. If you’re black, six months pregnant, two young people (a 19 years old woman and a 22 years old man) steal your mobile phone and you try to get it back, beside being kicked and beaten, you might be subjected to the tremendous violence of an unpronounceable threat like this one. This is what happened on a bus (without the other passengers intervening to prevent it) on the Romagna waterfront August 18 last and we know it because there were witnesses and the victim had the courage to speak out. Yet, how many similar incidents remain confined to the experience of those who suffer them, for fear of retaliation or lack of trust in the institutions that should guarantee protection and justice? We do not know. And how many murders whose “futile motives” conceal a racist motive? We do not know. Do the rules allow us to establish with absolute certainty the boundary between legitimate opinions and stigmatizing, intolerant, denigrating and racist *discourses*? In our opinion, no.

How much visibility of what we observe depends on the sources, tools, monitoring methods used and the systematic nature with which we devote the necessary attention? A lot.

These are the reasons why journalists often ask us questions – “How widespread is racism in our country? Is it growing or is it decreasing? Is Italy a racist country?” – we try to answer in a non-simplistic way, providing data and information available to us, while always reminding that racism is something far more complex, widespread and overflowing than a phenomenon that can be measured and observed with simple numbers.

### Official figures on acts of racial discrimination and violence

However, some official data do exist and it is worthwhile looking into them.

It should be remembered that these are administrative data, i.e. data produced by the authorities responsible for combating discrimination and racism, with activities such as monitoring and support to victims, collecting complaints and investigating them. Though they constitute, if they are collected and published regularly, a fundamental information base for the knowledge and analysis of the evolution of racism in our country, they still represent only those incidents of discrimination and racist violence that are the object of a formal complaint.

Moreover, as noted by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in its latest report on Italy, our country does not yet have a coordinated, systematic and transparent national system for collecting data on discrimination and racist violence (ECRI, 2016).<sup>1</sup> The data collected by Unar (Ufficio nazionale antidiscriminazioni razziali), Oscad (Osservatorio per la sicurezza contro gli atti discriminatori), the database of the Investigation System of the Judicial Police (SDI), the Ministry of Justice and ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) differ in terms of the purposes and methods of data collection, the timing of publication, the classification systems adopted and the heterogeneity of the data. The available official data must therefore be read in with such limitations in mind.

From 2010 to 2017, Oscad received a total of 1936 reports, 945 of which were related to offenses of a discriminatory nature.<sup>2</sup> Of these 579 were racist motives, 178 religious motives, 125 were related to sexual orientation, 52 to disability and 11 to gender identity.

Focusing on the last three years, 455 reports were received in 2014, 405 in 2015, 260 in 2016 and 53 until April 30, 2017; those relating to all offenses of a discriminatory nature were 232 in 2014, 191 in 2015, 108 in 2016 and 28 at April 30, 2017. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide annual information on the most frequent discriminatory motives.

The data recorded in the State Police Investigation System (SDI) provide more details on the specifically racist crimes committed in 2015 and 2016. The crimes punishable under the Mancino Law filed in the SDI were 188 in 2015 and 154 in 2016. Among them, racist demonstrations or racist symbol displays in public meetings were 98 in 2015 and 84 in 2016; access to stadiums with racist symbols 6, all in 2016; the aggravating circumstance qualifying 90 of the offenses recorded in 2015 and 70 in 2016.

<sup>1</sup> The report can be accessed at: [www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Italy/ITA-CbC-V-2016-019-ITA.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Italy/ITA-CbC-V-2016-019-ITA.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Oscad and SDI data were provided to us by Oscad during a seminar held in Rome on June 6, 2017. The 2016 SDI data are not consolidated.

67 in 2015 and 53 in 2016, were the offenses recorded with reference to the Reale Law: crimes of propaganda, incitement or commission of acts of discrimination are 31 in 2015 and 18 in 2016; incitement or commission of racist violence are 32 in 2015 and 28 in 2016; crimes of participation or assistance to racist groups 3 in 2015 and 3 in 2016; cases of promotion or direction of racist associations or groups 1 in 2015 and 4 in 2016.

At the international level, Odhr – Osce’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – publishes annually data on so-called “hate crimes” or “crimes committed on the basis of a discriminatory motive”.<sup>3</sup> The last year for which data are available is 2015. For Italy, the crimes reported by the Italian Police Force are 555 of which 369 are racist in nature, 45 are committed on the basis of sexual orientation and 141 against disabled persons or people belonging to other groups. To these are added 101 episodes reported by some anti-racist associations. In 2015, as in previous years, Odhr did not receive data from the Italian authorities regarding judicial proceedings initiated and convictions carried out.<sup>4</sup>

As for the discriminatory acts reported to Unar (whose jurisdiction concerns discrimination of non-criminal relevance), 2652 of the 2939 investigations initiated in 2016 were pertinent: the most common motive is ethnic or racist (69%) which in 17% of cases affects Roma, Sinti and Caminanti. Discrimination reported for different reasons are based on religion or belief (9%); disability (16%); sexual orientation and gender identity (6%) and age (5%).<sup>5</sup>

The latest ISTAT surveys, which have investigated the opinions of Italian citizens on immigrant citizens and the perceptions of discrimination against them, unfortunately date back to 2011-2012 and are not useful for the analysis of the period considered here.<sup>6</sup>

3 Odhr’s discriminatory motives include “race”, “colour”, “ethnicity”, language, religion, nationality and national origins, sexual orientation, gender and disability.

4 Data can be accessed at: [hatecrime.osce.org/italy](http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy)

5 Data is taken from a press release issued by Unar on July 4, 2017, available at: [www.unar.it/unar/portal/?p=8483](http://www.unar.it/unar/portal/?p=8483). The controversial events that have involved the agency in recent years and have hampered its smooth operation are probably responsible for its failure to publish a detailed report on the activities carried out in 2015 and 2016.

6 See: Istat, Anno 2011-2012, *Percezioni dei cittadini stranieri: soddisfazione, fiducia e discriminazione*, October 28, 2014, [www.istat.it/it/archivio/136691](http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/136691) and Istat, *I migranti visti dai cittadini*, Statistical report, July 11, 2012: [www.istat.it/it/archivio/66563](http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/66563)

## Chronicles of Ordinary Racism: The Data

**TABLE 1.A ACTS OF RACIST VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION RECORDED BETWEEN JANUARY 1, 2015, AND MAY 31, 2017**

ACTS	YEARS			TOTAL
	2015	2016	2017	
<b>VERBAL VIOLENCE</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>1197</b>
<b>PHYSICAL VIOLENCE</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OR THINGS</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>DISCRIMINATION</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>1483</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

**TABLE 1.B ACTS OF RACIST VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION RECORDED BETWEEN JANUARY 1, 2015, AND MAY 31, 2017**

ACTS	YEARS			TOTAL
	2015	2016	2017	
<b>VERBAL VIOLENCE</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>1197</b>
A1 Racist insults, threats or harassment	76	79	41	196
A2 Propaganda	481	261	91	833
of which				
A2A Racist statements and debates	402	160	42	604
A2B Racist writing	48	83	33	164
A2C Racist posters	4	16	0	20
A2D Racist publications	23	0	2	25
A2E Racist websites, blogs, social networks	4	2	14	20
A3 Public demonstrations	54	75	39	168
<b>PHYSICAL VIOLENCE</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>84</b>
of which				
B1 Bodily violence	39	24	10	73
B2 Deaths caused by violence, abuse, ill-treatment	2	4	5	11
<b>DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OR THINGS</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>44</b>
of which				
C1 Damage	10	7	6	23
C2 Fire	8	8	5	21
<b>DISCRIMINATION</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>158</b>
of which				
D1 Injunctions	32	19	2	53
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>1483</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)



**TABLE 2. PERPETRATORS OF THE ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION RECORDED BETWEEN JANUARY 1, 2015, AND MAY 31, 2017**

PERPRETRATORS	YEARS			TOTAL
	2015	2016	2017	
P1 Individuals	163	139	35	337
P2 Groups	111	172	76	359
P3 Institutional Actors	394	165	56	615
P4 Sport-people and Fans	39	47	31	117
P5 Media Operators	32	1	2	35
P6 Unknown	0	0	20	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>1483</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

In ten years, between January 1, 2007, and May 31, 2017, we have documented 5853 cases of discrimination, speeches, propaganda material, offenses, property damage, aggression and racist murder.<sup>7</sup> There are 1483 cases of which we became aware between 1 January 2015 and 31 May 2017.

Compared to the previous years, the novelty of the most recent period is the emergence, in addition to *ordinary* racism, a *cowardly* and at the same time *shameless* form of racism.

Cowardly, since not all the perpetrators of on-line malicious denigrations, threats and insults would dare to do the same in front of a person in the flesh. Shameless, because violence today, much more than ten years ago, is one of the ordinary ways that characterize the system of social relations and public debate, especially on-line. In a context that encourages the definition of one's own identity not on the basis of what one is, but on the basis of what distinguishes us from someone else and the boundary between human and inhuman is lost, racism is considered more legitimate than in the past; it happens that it is arrogantly claimed and can lead to a cruel death. And there are many, among those who do not allow themselves to be infected by xenophobia and racism, who nevertheless ignore this aspect or who try, more or less explicitly, to justify it.

This premise is necessary in order to try to give an account of what has happened over the last two and a half years, starting with those incidents of discrimination and racism that we have become aware of thanks to the news published in the press or on the web, reports by organizations, complaints that have come to us directly from the victims or from those who witnessed them.

<sup>7</sup> Detailed information for each incident can be accessed at: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-razzismo-quotidiano/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-razzismo-quotidiano/)

### Homicides and attempted murders: when racism kills

Noise caused in a condominium, waste generated in a parking area, non-payment of rent or, in most cases, the right rebellion in the face of wrong behavior, theft and insults suffered, can lead to murder and attempted murders which are actually based on racist motives. This is not always evident and even when it is, it may not be contested by the Public Prosecutor or recognized by the Judge. What is certain is that in the last two and a half years there have been many violent assaults on foreign nationals, some of them lethal. For some, the racist matrix is established.<sup>8</sup>

Firstly, there is the murder of Muhammad Shahzad Khan, a 28-year-old Pakistani citizen, who was killed in Rome in the Tor Pignattara district on September 18, 2014. Muhammad is beaten to death on the street by Daniel Balducci, aged 17, at the instigation of his father, “irritated” by the prayers spoken aloud.<sup>9</sup> According to the autopsy report “a repeated contusive trauma of the head with right temporal fracture and diffused sub arachnoid hemorrhage”. The aggressor is sentenced to 8 years in prison: a sentence later modified to 2 of probation to be spent in rehab. The father is sentenced to 21 years in prison for a homicide later reduced to 10 years for manslaughter.

On the night of February 21-22, 2015 in Calcio (Bergamo), Roberto Pantic is killed by a gun shot by 39 year-old Roberto Costelli, while he asleep in his camper. Pantic and his family are guilty of dirtying the area where they live with their caravan. The sentence, confirmed on appeal, is for multiple murder, 16 years in prison, but despite Costelli known to spread insults and threats against “gypsies” and foreigners on social media his racist motive is not taken into account.

As for Ionel Bebereche, 48 years old, he dies at Ponte di Nona (Rome) in the courtyard of the palace where he lives. It is May 18, 2015, he is stabbed in a dispute with a neighbor, Raimondo Grilletto. The “motive” for the murder appears to be the noise from the victim's apartment. According to news reports, it is a murder for “futile reasons”, preceded by similar quarrels, but the aggressor has a precedent: in the past he has set a pitbul against a street vendor.

Again in Rome, on June 2, 2015, R. N. N., a 33-year-old Romanian citizen, is first offended with racist insults by three extreme right-wing youngsters in a bar, then chased outside, then wounded inside the bakery where he sought refuge. Attempting to hit the throat, one of the three attackers hits his hand: he loses two

<sup>8</sup> When not analyzed below, detailed information regarding homicides mentioned here are available at [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the article by Serena Chiodo below.

fingers. In the meantime the Carabinieri have arrived on the scene and manage to avoid the worst. The attackers are arrested on charges of attempted murder, very serious injuries, resistance to public official and violation of Mancino's law.

On July 26, 2015 in Torre Chianca, on the Lecce coast, a 17-year-old street vendor from Guinea Bissau, is kicked and punched, dragged into the sea, grabbed by his neck and submerged in the water for a few seconds, in the presence of several bathers who ignore his requests for help. Luckily, he manages to free himself, but he faints. The police forces called on the spot are forced to ask for reinforcements in order to cope with friends trying to protect the attackers Mirko Castelluzzo, 36 years old, and Federico Ferri, 28, and be able to save the boy. Everything started from the "demand" of the young vendor to have his stolen goods returned. The attackers are receive a 12 years prison sentence for attempted murder aggravated by racist hatred.

On July 29, 2015, in the centre of Messina, Mustafa Mandili, 35 years old, is kicked and punched by Giovanni Raffone, 28. He dies in hospital after 10 days of agony. Mustafa has apparently molested the aggressor's girlfriend, hence the beating. The indictment of Raffone and his accomplice is for manslaughter and private violence.

On September 21, 2015, Sare Mamadou dies of shotgun wounds in the countryside of Foggiano.<sup>10</sup> As he was looking for work, together with two friends, he "dares" to collect some melons, after asking for permission from a farmer. Ferdinando and Raffaele Piacente, small owners of the area, catch them in the "act" and chase them for a few kilometers and shoot. The attackers are prosecuted for attempted murder. Also, one of his friends, Kadago Adam, was shot in the chest but manages to save himself.

On his part, Yusupha Susso, 21, a student from Gambia, manages to survive. While walking with two friends in the streets of Ballarò in Palermo he insulted and brutally attacked by a group of men on April 2, 2016.<sup>11</sup> He had "dared" to protest against two young people in scooters who had almost run them over. He is surrounded by his attackers and beaten, then E. R. a 28 year-old fires four shots and is attempted murder. Yusupha, having hit his head, ends up in a pharmacological coma for days, then luckily his health conditions improve.

On May 10, 2016 in Basilicogioiano (Parma) Mohamed Habassi, a 34-year-old Tunisian citizen, is killed after having suffered beatings, maltreatment, torture and mutilation by six men, including the companion of the owner of the house in

which he lives. The defendants' motive for the murder is that he has not paid the rent.<sup>12</sup>

On July 5, 2016, in Fermo, Emmanuel Chidi Namdi, a 36-year Nigerian citizen and asylum seeker, is killed by Amedeo Mancini, 39 years old, close to the right-wing circles.<sup>13</sup> Emmanuel reacted to racist insults directed at his partner by Mancini and another man, resulting in a dispute which left Emmanuel dead. The trial ends with a plea-bargain: Mancini is sentenced for murder aggravated by racist hatred, but due to extenuating circumstances (Emmanuel's reaction) the sentence to 4 years imprisonment, is turned into house arrest. In the end due to good conduct, he is released with mandatory signature.

On July 20, 2016, in San Cono (Catania), four Egyptian minors are subject to a real raid by five young Italians, near the reception center where they live. Baseball bat blows hit M. M. is hit to the head by a baseball bat, the resulting head trauma puts him in danger of life; his friends manage end up with bruises to their legs. Thanks to the video of one of the victims, three of the attackers are identified and put under house arrest on charges of illegal harbor of improper weapon, attempted murder of M. M. and injuries aggravated by futile motives and "ethnic or racial discrimination".

On July 22, 2016, in Rome, via di Torrenova, a 42-year-old Senegalese citizen, who works as a security guard in a casino is victim of another raid. Five individuals beat him with kicks and fists and then with a stool, yelling racist abuse. The prognosis is 40 days. The beating is recorded by the security cameras. Investigations lead to the arrest of four brothers and a cousin for attempted murder, with aggravating circumstances of futile motives and racism.

On March 22, 2017, in Rimini, Emmanuel Nnamani, a 39 year-old Nigerian asylum seeker, was attacked, while he is in the vicinity of a supermarket; he helps customers empty their trolleys in exchange for a small fee. A 39-year-old man insults him with racist phrases, attacks him, wounds him with a knife at the abdomen, then, as he Emmanuel tries to escape, climbs in his car and repetitively tries to run him over. The victim has very serious injuries, multiple fractures, the spleen destroyed and some internal hemorrhages: he remains in coma and in danger of life for three weeks. The attacker is arrested on charges of attempted murder, aggravated by petty motives and racism.

The crude sequence of the above facts is creepy and speaks for itself. We only have a few comments to add. Even when attacks occur on the streets and

10 Cf. Paola Andrisani's article below.

11 Cf. Serena Chiodo's article below.

12 Cf. Annamaria Rivera "The martyrdom of Mohamed Habassi" in this volume.

13 Cf. Serena Chiodo, below.

in the presence of third parties, victims almost never receive help. This indicates the existence of an incomprehensible indifference or a more understandable, but equally worrying fear of the aggressors, especially when they are acting in groups. In both cases, the attackers can count on widespread passivity that needs to be countered.

The most terrible acts of violence are committed by individuals or groups, who almost always combine physical violence with verbal abuse: it is the latter that reveals the racist matrix of aggression. Perhaps it is also for this reason, that charges brought against many of the murders mentioned above, have included the aggravating circumstance foreseen by the Mancino Law and in some cases have been upheld in the rulings.

We cannot avoid noting that to these deaths many others need to be added which, though not directly caused by racist violence, are nevertheless unacceptable and could have been avoided. First of all, the suicide of Pateh Sabally comes to mind; a 22-year-old asylum seeker from the Gambia who, on January 26, 2017 in Venice, leaps into the Grand Canal, after having been denied his asylum application. Pateh drowns himself, ignoring the four lifebuoys that are thrown at him. His suicide occurs before the eyes of at least 150 people; none of those present tries to save him, yet there are those who film him while drowning and those who mockingly call him “Africa”.

Again, on May 11, 2017, Francesca, Angelica and Elizabeth, Romani of Bosnian origin, aged 8, 4 and 20, die in Rome as a result of an arson attack on their camper where they are sleeping with their parents and 8 siblings. The camper has been in the parking lot in front of a supermarket, via della Primavera, in Centocelle (Rome) for a few days. Investigations are still ongoing, but regardless of who is responsible for the massacre, one wonders why the Halilovic family was forced to live in a camper in a parking lot. And needs to know all family members though born in Italy have never been recognized as Italian citizens. On the contrary, the head of the family has instead received two expulsion orders, that is to say, he has been ordered to return to his country of origin, a country which, in fact, is Italy. As Marco Brazzoduro, who knew the family:

“Now one thing is clear and obvious: if the Halilovic family had not been forced by its poverty to live in a camper but in a normal apartment instead... that tragedy would not have happened”.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Brazzoduro M., “L’orrore e il nulla”, *Comune-info.net*, May 11, 2017: [comune-info.net/2017/05/lorrore-e-il-nulla-rom/](http://comune-info.net/2017/05/lorrore-e-il-nulla-rom/)

Yet again in Rome, on May 4, 2017, during a police raid against vendors of illegal merchandise, a regular occurrence in capital, Ning Maguette, a 53 years old Senegalese, dies. Ning is found on the street in a pool of blood. The autopsy confirms that he died of heart attack. Would he still be alive if he had not been forced to flee the city’s police in an attempt to prevent the seizure of his merchandise? We cannot know.

To such to this macabre list one should add the border victims and deaths of farm workers in the countryside that we will discuss in the chapters below.

If we return to actual racist violence, we need to stress that murders and attempted murders are only the most serious cases of the 84 cases of racist aggression committed between January 2015 and May 2017 that we know of. It is impossible to remember them all here. Most of them are attacks perpetrated by individuals in the most diverse places: buses, trains, taxis, football fields, public services, schools, beaches and, of course, streets. Among the attackers there are also very young people and minors. The victims most affected are men from Bangladesh, Senegal and Morocco; many are street vendors, at least six of whom have been assaulted by minors.

In addition to the disturbing recurrence of violence against people, damage to property (at least 44 cases documented since January 2015) is also a cause for concern, especially when such incidents are attacks against facilities that host asylum seekers, or that it is announced that they will do so. Among the 24 attacks against such centers that we have recorded, there are 15 arson or attempted arson:<sup>15</sup> they represent the extreme and most violent manifestation of that hostility against migrants and asylum seekers that, especially since 2015, has crossed the country in the most diverse forms.

<sup>15</sup> Such attacks are all documented online. Here we simply list the location and year of reference. In 2015, reception centres in Stradella (PV), San Colombano di Collio (BS), Prada di San Zeno di Montagna (VR), Lecco, Quinto (TV), Foggia, Licola Mare (NA), Marino (RM), Brindisi (BR) were damaged or ignited. In 2016 the attacks took place in Rimini, Ussita (MC), Parma, San Mauro Torinese, Burcei (CA), Lavarone (TN), Bovolone (VR), Padua. In 2017, until the end of May, they are documented in Borrello (FC), Aselogna (VR), Benevento, Cumignano sul Naviglio (CR), Roncone (TN), Montagnana (PD) and Gambaro di Ferriere (PC). Other cases recorded in 2015 included an incendiary raid against the house of a Romanian family in Cogoleto (GE), road signs at Oderzo Motta (TV) and an incendiary raid against an Islamic butcher’s shop in Rimini; another fire against a grocery store run by Nigerian citizens in Macerata; a fire against the centre of Islamic culture in Massa Lombarda and damage to the building that was supposed to become a restaurant run by two Moroccan women in Sassari. In 2016, six cars owned by Romanian citizens were set on fire in Civitavecchia (RM) and arson hits a Roma camp in Casalnuovo, Naples. In 2017 there was a fire in the house of a Moroccan family in Genoa; in Scampia (NA) the restaurant run by a group of Italian and Romani women was damaged; a fire was set to the bar run by a Moroccan citizen in Pioltello (MI).

### A public debate dominated by xenophobic and racist propaganda

Migration has long been at the center of public debate, the last two and a half years are no exception but they accentuate, and in some respects exacerbate, some trends already observed in the past. The importance of the role of social media, which has multiplied the number of actors involved in the production and dissemination of news and are increasingly used as (sometimes unverified) sources of information, has further increased.<sup>16</sup> This makes it increasingly difficult to analyze in sufficient detail processes of stigmatization, denigration and dehumanization of migrants, asylum seekers, foreign citizens and Romani minorities that take place in the different domains (political, media and popular) of the public discourse.

A Facebook post or Twit can become the source of news for the traditional press. At the same time, social media is one of the main distribution channels for mainstream press articles. Both systems of communication are used by those who work at political and institutional level making their messages bounce from one channel to the other. Individual citizens, users and readers, in turn, simultaneously play the role of authors of content, distributors of political propagandas and newspaper articles, while their posts can be instrumentalized to evoke a public discourse increasingly misidentified as “common sense”.

Such equivalent articulation of ideas on the net is only apparent and tends to encourage and legitimize the expression of opinions by anyone on any subject, to blur the hierarchy and reliability of sources, to simplify interpretive frames and the languages used. In such virtual interweaving, roles and responsibilities tend to be blurred, especially when free opinions degenerate into violent, stigmatizing, xenophobic and racist aggressions.

However, a few points should remain firm. First of all, the responsibilities of those who, in their political or institutional role, continue to *really* influence public debate. Secondly, the role still played by traditional media, which instead tend to identify the net (and social media in particular) a scapegoat in order to decline any responsibility for hostility against migrants, refugees and Romani that since mid 2016 has increasingly returned to target them. Thirdly, the (very profitable) behavior of social media operators, who have certainly not distinguished themselves, particularly in our country, in putting a stop to the rampant racism on the net.

Finally, the proper attention paid to the network and hate speech should not lead us to underestimate what is happening in the real world, where physical violence and offenses directed at people and things are proliferating.

It is in this context, that the large number (1197) of verbal violence document-

16 Cf. Paola Andrisani's article on on-line racism above.

ed since January 2015 should be placed. 196 of such offenses are racist threats or abuse, 833 propaganda expressions and 68 are public demonstrations. This reflects a political, media and cultural debate in which the theme of migration and refugee arrivals in Italy and Europe is articulated with aggressive speeches or stimulates racist offenses, threats or abuses. The landings of migrants in southern Italy, the humanitarian crisis in Greece and along the so-called Balkan Route, the judicial investigations into the management of reception centers, tend to contribute a generalized and stigmatizing criminalization of migrants, refugees and foreign nationals of third countries permanently resident in Italy, with a particular stigmatization against Muslim citizens, that coincide with the numerous attacks that unfortunately affect Europe.

### “Let's kick Islam out”

The attack against *Charly Ebdo*, editorial offices on January 7, dramatically opens the year 2015, offering those interested in cynically exploiting the horror of the massacres and the disorientation of the public, the opportunity to relaunch a serious and systematic campaign against the citizens of Muslim faith present in Italy, punctually re-proposed during the subsequent attacks. The daily newspapers *Libero* and *Il Giornale* make it their mission. The Jihadist nature of the attacks is a sufficient argument to identify the entire Muslim community with terrorism, to bring back the thesis of the clash between civilizations, to support the incompatibility between an indistinct “Islam” and the West and to declare a real media war. “This is Islam”, preceded by expressions such “Paris massacre”, and “Islamic butchers” are the headlines of *Il Giornale* e di *Libero* on January 8, 2015. Among the cover pages that have caused the most indignation is the one published *Libero* the day after the new attack that hit Paris on November 13, 2015. That “Islamic Bastards”, induces the association Carta di Roma,<sup>17</sup> to file a complaint to the Order of Journalists.

As time goes by the such expressions become shriller: after the March 23, 2016, attack in Brussels, the headline of *Il Giornale*, is “Let's kick Islam out”. The editorial, signed by the Editor Sallusti, combines Islamophobia with xenophobia in his attack against migrants and asylum seekers who arrive on our coasts.<sup>18</sup>

17 See: [www.cartadiroma.org/news/gli-organi-disciplinari-dei-giornalisti-si-pronuncino-sulla-nuova-tecnica-di-titolazione-ideata-dal-direttore-di-libero/](http://www.cartadiroma.org/news/gli-organi-disciplinari-dei-giornalisti-si-pronuncino-sulla-nuova-tecnica-di-titolazione-ideata-dal-direttore-di-libero/)

18 See Sallusti A., “Cacciamo l'Islam da casa nostra”, *Il Giornale*, January 8, 2015: “Islam and Allah are incompatible with our civilization, they have the blood-stained hands of our children and they cannot get enough of it. This is the issue, everything else is non-sense. They use the misinterpreted principle of Western tolerance to undermine Europe where their ancestors failed in 1571 in the battle of Lepanto, the last obstacle to the Muslim fleets towards the anni-



One arrives at the real incitement to violence with Vittorio Feltri's April 11, 2017, editorial "React with violence" on *Libero*,<sup>19</sup> to cruelly express the thesis that this tantamounts to a "Western suicide" while at the same time contrasting "Who welcomes and who kills", as Magdi Allam does from the columns of *Il Giornale* on 18 August 18, 2017, after the attack in Barcelona.<sup>20</sup>

The dramatic and sometimes mocking headlines that follow the attacks also serve to influence public debate on other issues in the political debate. Thus a (feeble) statement by Paolo Gentiloni, the President of the Council of Ministers,<sup>21</sup> at the annual meeting of *Comunione e Liberazione*, is exploited to extend stigmatization against second-generation migrants and to relaunch the campaign against the definitive approval of the citizenship reform: "Gentiloni rewards terrorists: citizenship for all" is the August 20, 2017, headline adopted by *Libero*.<sup>22</sup>

The anti-Muslim crusade by intellectuals, political leaders and journalists is certainly not a novelty of the last few years; but today the violence of language used and the permeability of the web easily allow its popularity in public debate (on-line and off-line) that seems to reward those who use words as "media truncheons".<sup>23</sup>

### *The acceptance that divides*

The uninterrupted presence of migration in the public debate, however, revolves more persistently around reports regarding migrants crossing the eastern

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hilation of Christianity. The dead of yesterday, like those of previous years and months, are victims not only of Isis but also of tolerance. In the name of equality and goodness, nobody has defended them. Today as in past decades, when Belgium, the first European country, opened its doors to integration without rules and limits. If we don't put a stop to this, provided it is not already too late, this is where we are ending".

19 See Serena Chiodo below.

20 The article can be accessed at: [www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/chi-accoglie-e-chi-uccide-1431511.html](http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/chi-accoglie-e-chi-uccide-1431511.html)

21 These were his words during the meeting: "the Government must not be afraid to recognize rights and to ask for respect for duties also from those who were born in Italy and study in our schools". See: [www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/08/20/news/gentiloni\\_meeting\\_cl\\_rimini-173444069/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/08/20/news/gentiloni_meeting_cl_rimini-173444069/)

22 Cf.: [cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=212017LV1109208001](http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu/RassegnaStampa/LetturaNL.aspx?dest=naletto@lunaria.org&cod=212017LV1109208001)

23 We borrow the expression used by the President of the *Federazione nazionale della stampa* with reference to the media harassment directed against the President of the Chamber of Deputies Laura Boldrini. See: Giulietti G., "President Boldrini denounces the verbal harassment received. The language of hatred is the new form of the media truncheon". [www.articolo21.org/2017/08/la-presidente-boldrini-denuncia-le-molestie-verbali-ricevute-il-linguaggio-dellodio-e-la-nuova-forma-del-manganello-mediatico/](http://www.articolo21.org/2017/08/la-presidente-boldrini-denuncia-le-molestie-verbali-ricevute-il-linguaggio-dellodio-e-la-nuova-forma-del-manganello-mediatico/)

and central Mediterranean and the related theme of reception. 2015 is the year of the humanitarian crisis that upsets Europe, not only reaching the southern coasts of Italy, but following the Balkan Route. The numerous massacres at sea and the scale of arrivals call Europe and the responsibilities of national governments into question. Much more than in previous years, news focus on EU meetings and the conflict that divides member countries regarding the European policy on migration. The pressure exerted on Italy and Greece, the walls and barbed wire raised in the Eastern countries, the relocation plan agreed at EU level and the negotiations that preceded the agreement with the Turkish Government attract media attention, especially through the words of politicians.<sup>24</sup> The attitude of the media is constantly fluctuating between an alarmist representation of flows, indignation at the massacres taking place at sea, the emphasis on political declarations calling for rejection, and the analysis of the conflicts that divide European border countries from those less directly exposed to migration. The image of the little Aylan, the Syrian child drowned in the few miles' of sea that divides Turkey from Greece,<sup>25</sup> pierces, only for a short time, the wall of refusal that crosses Europe, together with Angela Merkel's decision to temporarily and unilaterally suspend the application of the Dublin Regulation for Syrian refugees.<sup>26</sup> All the main Italian media report it and, at the same time, the initiatives of civil society that demand open policies are popular, unlike what had happened up to June.<sup>27</sup> But this is just brief interlude.

Already by the end of 2015, and with ever-increasing momentum 2016 and 2017, the forced closure of the Balkan route shifts the focus on the central Mediterranean route and Italy. The issue of arrivals is intertwined more and more frequently with the controversy concerning the management of reception and the political clash that informs it. A clash that is taking place in Parliament and in the media, but that eventually trickles down to territories where protests against the opening of new reception facilities multiply.

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24 According to Carta di Roma in the first ten months of 2015 there are 1,452 headlines in the first pages of newspapers dedicated to migration and 3437 news items in prime time news on the 7 main Italian tv channels (TG1, TG2, TG3, TG4, TG5, Studio Aperto and TgLa7). See Carta di Roma, *Notizie di confine. Terzo rapporto di Carta di Roma*, 2015 at: [www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Rapporto-2015\\_-cartadiroma\\_EMBARGATO-FINO-AL-15-DICEMBRE-ORE-1030.pdf](http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Rapporto-2015_-cartadiroma_EMBARGATO-FINO-AL-15-DICEMBRE-ORE-1030.pdf)

25 The photograph of the body of the lifeless child found on the beach in Bodrum was released on September 3, 2015, and soon is seen around the world.

26 The suspension announced on 25 August 2015 lasts until October 21, 2015.

27 Let us recall as an example the march of barefoot women and men organized in many Italian cities on September 7, 2015. Other initiatives against the massacres in the Mediterranean, such as the one organized in Rome on June 21, 2015, had a limited number of participants.

The government and the majority parties are forced to defend, from the easy instrumental attacks perpetually launched by the opposition, a reception system that is still unprepared to host refugees whose numbers however substantial are nowhere near those hosted by other countries such as Germany. The stigmatizing and xenophobic speeches urging to “reject them all” find fertile ground in the news of inquiries involving managers and, in some cases, local agencies and reception services. As in previous years public debate is hegemonized by the issue of costs and unsustainability of reception. Slogans of political leaders are readily picked up by the media and overflow on the web and often end up inspiring protest events. Only in 2016 there were at least 210 of such events that in different forms articulated the refusal to accept migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in our country; 79 cases can be traced back to political propaganda initiatives, while the other 131 cases concerned public initiatives and street protests.<sup>28</sup> Whether through banners, posters, press statements, signatures, assemblies or barricades, these events express from one side of Italy to the other a more or less organized opposition through similar slogans<sup>29</sup> and arguments: in addition to the costs that reception entails and the evocation of the hardships caused by the economic crisis on Italian society, the misuse of resources by the reception business, emphasizing the number of arrivals and therefore to evoke the fear of “invasion”, the related risks for the security of the territory, women and children. The idea that the various initiatives have in common is that there is a competition between national citizens and foreign nationals, which must be stopped.

These are all well-known themes in the public debate of recent years and we have discussed them in previous editions. The real novelty is represented by the ease with which intolerant, disparaging and discriminatory discourses are transformed into real and at times successful territorial initiatives of social opposition against the arrival and accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>30</sup>

### Guests “forever”?

As of October 2016, another topic reappears in the political and media debate, even if it is not comparable to the themes mentioned above: citizenship

reform. The reform, which was finally approved by the Chamber on October 13, 2015, is to be debated by the Senate. Approval in one branch of Parliament is very troubled due to the firm opposition of the Lega Nord, the abstention of the M5S and internal divisions by the majority. Parliamentary opposition can take advantage of public initiatives organized by right-wing movements. In Treviso on November 24, 2015, the cultural association Fronte Skinheads attacks the office of Caritas and some local branches of the Partito Democratico, posting placards with slogans such as “Ius soli and Immigration You have killed the nation” that seek to denounce “those who continue to carry out a clear political plan aimed at annihilating Italian identity” On March 31, 2016, a fake paper bomb, together with the message “Ius Soli is a bomb against Europe”. Responsibility for this action is claimed by Forza Nuova.

The link between the reform and the jihadist attacks that hit Europe reaches the Senate on June 15, 2017, where Forza Nuova and Casa Pound activists exhibit posters that portray the photos of the authors of some attacks accompanied by the slogan “Thank you, ius soli”. The posters reflect what Senator Calderoli argues in a more restrained fashion in the Senate:

But what frightens me is not only the selling off of our identity, but the security aspect. I cannot forget the countries where there have been attacks and I cannot fail to consider a law that seeks to establish the Ius soli, because the attackers, all of them (I am talking about Brussels, London, Manchester, anywhere in Europe where the attacks took place) had in their pockets a passport of the country they attacked.<sup>31</sup>

After it is announced that the debate on the Law was to be postponed in September, the Secretary of the Northern League declares that he is blocking Parliament, hoping that “Italians demonstrating in the streets should lend us a hand”.<sup>32</sup> The M5S is in full agreement, which, through its leader, dismisses the law as “unacceptable mess”,<sup>33</sup> confirming in reality a position on citizenship already expressed at least since 2012, which therefore seems to ignore the text of the reform before Parliament.<sup>34</sup>

28 See Lunaria (edited by), *Accoglienza. La propaganda e le proteste del rifiuto, le scelte istituzionali sbagliate*, January 2017, available at: [www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/0FO-CUS1\\_DEFINITIVO\\_13marzo.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/0FO-CUS1_DEFINITIVO_13marzo.pdf)

29 Here are some examples: “The business of migration is the scourge of our nation”; “Cologne, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Cerignola: let’s oppose the invasion”; “Enough with this invasion: no refugees”; “No illegal immigrants next to our children”; “Hands off our women”.

30 A review of the protests organized in 2016 is available at: [www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Marzo\\_FOCUS1\\_DEFINITIVO\\_Appendice.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Marzo_FOCUS1_DEFINITIVO_Appendice.pdf)

31 See: [www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Resaula&leg=17&id=1027655](http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Resaula&leg=17&id=1027655)

32 See, “Ius Soli: Salvini, blocchiamo Camere”, *Ansa.it*, July 17, 2017, [www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/topnews/2017/07/17/ius-soli-salvini-blocchiamo-camere\\_1c234a35-942b-41d6-b9c9-bc1d-f4dfdb8b.html](http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/topnews/2017/07/17/ius-soli-salvini-blocchiamo-camere_1c234a35-942b-41d6-b9c9-bc1d-f4dfdb8b.html)

33 See: [www.beppegrillo.it/2017/06/il\\_movimento\\_5\\_stelle\\_fa\\_lalleanza\\_con\\_gli\\_italiani.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2017/06/il_movimento_5_stelle_fa_lalleanza_con_gli_italiani.html)

34 In January 21, 2012, Grillo had already declared on his blog that: “Granting citizenship to those were born in Italy, even if parents were not, is meaningless. Or rather, it makes sense. Distract Italians from real problems and turn them into fans. On one side, the left-wing

In the media, the debate on citizenship returns above all in October 2016 when the movement of young people *#italianisenzacittadinanza* and the promoters of the campaign *L' Italia sono anche io* revive a campaign of initiatives to urge the definitive approval of the law blocked in the Senate. In addition to the many statements made by the majority and opposition politicians, the voice of those directly concerned is also featured extensively on the pages of some national newspapers, some of which support their cause.<sup>35</sup>

Other topics that have attracted the attention of public debate in recent months (the legislative initiatives of the Gentiloni Government on immigration and urban security and SAR operations carried out by NGOs) have already been discussed elsewhere and so we do not go into more detail.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning some specific cases involving representatives of the institutions.

On June 27, 2015, after the terrorist attacks in Tunisia, France, Somalia and Kuwait, Giorgia Meloni, leader of Fratelli d' Italia, wrote a post on her Facebook page which is then posted on the website *stranieriinitalia.it* on June 29.

Many Muslims all over the world interpret their religion in a violent way, and this vision is shared by many who live in the West. This is the harsh reality of the facts. What can we do? ... Meanwhile, let us avoid importing into Italy a problem that we do not have today: immigration is enough and, above all, immigration from Muslim countries is sufficient. The (small) proportion of immigrants that we believe we need, we should take it from those peoples who have shown that they are not violent. I do not know if there are any cases of terrorism involving Filipinos, Argentines, Ukrainians, Peruvian.<sup>36</sup>

This post is reported to the National Anti-Discrimination Office (Unar) which, on July 30, sends a letter of “caution” signed by the director, Marco de Giorgi.

This office, despite the intangible nature of the principle of free expression of thought, guaranteed by the Italian Constitution, and sharing the concern regarding the management of such a complex phenomenon as migration, believes that a communication based on generalizations and

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do-gooders who force upon the rest of Italians to shoulder the burden of their deliriums; on the other, the Northern League and xenophobic movements that gain consensus from the fear of the ‘liberalization’ of births.”

35 Such as *Avvenire*, *La Repubblica* and *il manifesto*.

36 See, “Basta immigrazione dai Paesi musulmani”, Giorgia Meloni alle Crociate”, *Stranieriinitalia.it*, June 29, 2015, at: [www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita/attualita/attualita-sp-754/qbasta-immigrazione-dai-paesi-musulmani-giorgia-meloni-alle-crociate.html](http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita/attualita/attualita-sp-754/qbasta-immigrazione-dai-paesi-musulmani-giorgia-meloni-alle-crociate.html)

stereotypes does not favor a prompt and adequate process of integration and social cohesion (...). The opportunity is taken to ask to consider in the future, the opportunity to transmit messages of different tenor to the community.

The Director's response leads the Honorable Meloni to protest against the act of “censorship” against her and writes to the President of the Council of Ministers and to launch a protest campaign on Twitter. *Il Giornale* embraces its campaign that finds many supporters both on-line and as well as among her party's activists. The incident provokes a request for clarification to Unar by the Secretary General of Palazzo Chigi Paolo Aquilanti, who refers to article 21 of the Constitution on freedom of expression and article 68 on the uncensurability of opinions expressed by parliamentarians. After a few months, the Director is removed from office.

The second case is all too well-known to most people for the virulence and continuity with which it has manifested itself above all on social media, interweaving sexism and racism, targeting the President of the Chamber of Deputies Laura Boldrini. The third most senior office of the Republic immediately after she was installed in her office, she became the target of a campaign of abuse and misogynistic and racist harassment, which we refuse to report here, and which involved a policeman whose video had a viral spread on the net.<sup>37</sup> The violence of on-line comments and messages has reached such severity that she decides to file a complaint against the perpetrators of such violence.<sup>38</sup>

There is a risk of sending a message of mistrust to institution that are entrusted with the upholding of the law and the safety of citizens. How can I ask our young people not to succumb and denounce web bullies if I don't do it myself?

The President explains very clearly the meaning of her choice: there is not only the legitimate right to protect herself, but also the awareness of the exemplary value that the behavior of institutional actors assumes towards citizens.

Unfortunately, an equal awareness does not seem to be shared by her parliamentary colleagues, who rejected the request made to the Senate by the Bergamo Public Prosecutor's Office for authorization to proceed against Senator Calderoli

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37 See, “Insulti contro Boldrini e extracomunitari, sospeso agente polstrada”, *Ansa.it*, July 22, 2017, at: [www.ansa.it/piemonte/notizie/2017/07/21/insulti-razzisti-agenti-stradale-video-diventa-virale\\_60ed867b-ae1-4610-92f9-5f5cc4dece94.html](http://www.ansa.it/piemonte/notizie/2017/07/21/insulti-razzisti-agenti-stradale-video-diventa-virale_60ed867b-ae1-4610-92f9-5f5cc4dece94.html)

38 See the message on her Facebook profile on August 17, 2017 which also includes some of the most savage insults: [www.facebook.com/Laura-Boldrini-325228170920721/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/Laura-Boldrini-325228170920721/?fref=ts)

for his words addressed to another favored target of racist stigma, the former Minister for integration policies Cécile Kyenge.<sup>39</sup>

Stigmatizing speeches and actual discriminatory harassment can therefore also target those who work in various ways to support migrants, refugees and Romani minorities and do not even stop at institutional positions. On the other hand, parliamentary immunity can provide protection from accusations of racial discrimination.

### *Offenses, insults and daily threats*

The exacerbation of public debate on migration seems to mimic the cases of daily racism that we have witnessed in the places of common life. These too are not a novelty, but the correlation with the topics that are at the heart of political and media rhetoric seems to be more recurrent than in the past. In Rimini, a janitor can address a 10-year-old girl with a “go back from where you come from, you dirty Muslim” while commenting on the Paris bombings of November 2015.<sup>40</sup> “You go back home and take your f... wars with you” is what a university student in Bologna says in the middle street, the insult is accompanied by spit.<sup>41</sup> On the same day, an 18-year-old in Sarzana receives racist insults on the street because of the veil she wears.<sup>42</sup> The phrase “go back from where...” is a continuous refrain that also accompanies the dozens of offenses and threats directed against blacks. The example of the letters left on a girl’s desk at school is disgusting: “A nigger that gets full marks is unheard”, “Go back home”, “You were born dirty”, that combine envy with racism.<sup>43</sup> There are also many racist chants that continue to flood our football fields, even though they are increasingly being pursued at disciplinary level.

39 During a speech held on July 13, 2013 in Treviglio, Senate Vice President Calderoli compared the then Minister Kyenge to an orangutan: “I love animals, bears and wolves as is known, but when I see the images of Kyenge I can’t help but think, even if I don’t say that it is, to the likeness of an orangutan”. After opening an investigation, the Bergamo Public Prosecutor’s Office asked and obtained the indictment of the Senator for “libel aggravated by racial discrimination”. As a Member of the European Parliament, the Public Prosecutor’s Office was obliged to ask the Senate to assess whether the sentence pronounced could be regarded as an opinion expressed within the framework of parliamentary activity: in this case parliamentary immunity applies. In February 2015, the Senate Immunities Council issued a negative opinion. In September 2015, the House, which was called upon to vote on the Council’s decision, decided to proceed with two separate votes. Authorization to proceed was voted for the offense of defamation and not for the aggravating circumstance of racial discrimination.

40 November 21, 2015 – Source: *blognotizie.info*

41 November 19, 2015 – Source: *Il Fatto Quotidiano*

42 November 21, 2015, Sarzana (SP) – Source: *La Nazione*

43 It happened in Pisa on May 19, 2015 – Source: *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*

### **Creative discrimination**

From 2015 onwards, institutional acts of racial discrimination have not been lacking. In addition to the numerous city council deliberations that have resumed the ban on wearing burqa in public places, there are several cases in which municipalities have decided to hinder the opening of new reception centers and to issue some creative ordinances intervening in the most diverse areas. These are accompanied by some examples of regional acts on the part of regional governments and prefects that directly or indirectly tend to restrict the rights of foreign citizens. Here again, only a few examples can be given.

In March 2015 the Mayor of Pisa (Partito Democratico) ordered some public fountain in the center to be turned off. Following a question put by the municipal opposition, the technicians, referring to an act adopted earlier, do not hesitate to explain that “As for the fountain of Via Putignano, a request was made for the cessation in 2009 because the gypsies were going to take water there”. In December 2015, the Lombardy Region first cuts the regional funds to parks “that host migrants”, then prohibits entry into hospitals and regional offices “with burqa, niqab or any object that prevents the recognition of the person”. In January 2016, the Prefecture of Sondrio sent a circular addressed to the managing bodies inviting asylum seekers hosted in the reception centres to “Avoid walking through the country in large groups, limiting themselves to small groups of 4 or 5 people. Large groups must be accompanied by suitable staff. Avoid frequent use of playgrounds or public facilities for children and families.” In June 2016, at Monfalcone, the speaker in the Municipal Council member of the Northern League proposed to remove the benches “where idler, immigrants of dubious legal status, drunkards, addicts, and various hoodlums camp out”. In the same month, the Mayor of Carcare issued an ordinance establishing the “prohibition to reside, even occasionally, for people from African or Asian countries, in any facility, without a regular health certificate attesting their sanitary conditions and their suitability to reside”. In August 2016, the Mayor of Castel Mella, again with an ordinance, reserves the entrance to the Fontanone Park for residents only. In February 2017, the Regional Council of Veneto amended the regional law governing early childhood education services n. 32/1990 in order to give priority to children whose parents have been living or working in Veneto for at least 15 years.

In addition, forced eviction of Romani camps and buildings occupied by asylum-seekers has continued in recent years, often in the absence of alternative housing solutions.

Here it is impossible not to forget what happens in Rome. On August 19, hundreds of agents forcibly evicted the building occupied by about 800 Eritrean,



Ethiopian and Somali citizens in Piazza Indipendenza, near Termini station. Most of them are already recognized as refugees who have been living in the building since 2011. The operation is carried out without alternative housing solutions for the people who live there, which include many families and many children.

Some 150 occupants camp in the square below. On August 24, at six o'clock in the morning, dozens of riot police were forcefully evacuate the occupants from the square and the few dozen who, due to health reasons had been allowed to remain in the first floor of the occupied building. The evacuation is brutal: batons and hydrants are used against women and children, 13 injured people are treated by MSF doctors. The few activists and journalists who came to the site are prevented from approaching the occupants, but the images of the charges circulated quickly on the net and around the world. A video captures a police officer as he utters the following words "they have to disappear, tough luck to them, if they throw anything, break an arm". The next day, the Prefect of Rome, interviewed by *Corriere della Sera*, justifies the police intervention as a "cleaning operation" to "restore legality".

All this happens without the presence of the Mayor of Rome and the Councillor for social policies. The few activists present in the city bring support to the people who have been evicted and organize a demonstration August 26, after which they request the opening of an institutional table with the Municipality and the Prefecture. Rome's eviction exemplifies very well how the solution to the inadequacy of reception policies and the abandonment of public social housing policies is addressed as a question of public order "sweeping away" from the cities people in conditions of poverty and housing distress as if they were waste.

Discriminatory measures adopted at local level are not the only ones. The discrimination provided for by the 2016 Stability Law, which recognized the right to request the so-called "culture bonus" to young Italian or from "other European countries", is cancelled by Law No. 89 of May 26, 2016. The law eliminates any reference to citizenship, extending the bonus to all "residents of the national territory, in possession, where provided for, of a valid residence permit".

The exorbitant payment of the tourist tax introduced in 2011 (€200 for the issue of the European residence permit for long term residents, from €80 to €100 for other types of permits), is the subject of a long legal dispute which has not yet been definitively closed. The ruling of the European Court of Justice, which in 2014 defined the contribution as "disproportionate" and "likely to create an obstacle to the exercise of the rights conferred", did not remove this unfair discrimination.

The final decision on an appeal filed by Inca-Cgil in 2012 came only in Oc-

tober 2016, when the Council of State rejected the appeal filed by the Government against the cancellation of the contribution previously decided by the Lazio Regional Administrative Court.<sup>44</sup> The effects of the decision were suspended at the Government's request, due to the significant economic impact caused by the cancellation of the tax. Finally, the Decree of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, published on June 8, 2017,<sup>45</sup> redefined the amounts to be paid: 40 euros for residence permits with a duration of more than three months and less than or equal to one year; 50 euros for residence permits with a duration of more than one year and less than or equal to two years; 100 euros for the issue of the EU residence permit for long-term residents and for managers and skilled workers.

Discrimination is therefore *halved* but not eliminated.<sup>46</sup>

44 For a reconstruction of the whole story, see: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/nessuna-tassa-sul-permesso-soggiorno-consiglio-respinge-ricorso-del-governo/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/nessuna-tassa-sul-permesso-soggiorno-consiglio-respinge-ricorso-del-governo/); [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ancora-lesoso-balzello-sul-permesso-di-soggiorno/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/ancora-lesoso-balzello-sul-permesso-di-soggiorno/); [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/caro-soggiorno-abolito-il-contributo-economico-per-rilascio-e-rinnovo-del-documento/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/caro-soggiorno-abolito-il-contributo-economico-per-rilascio-e-rinnovo-del-documento/)

45 See: Decreto del 5 maggio 2017, "Modifica del decreto 6 ottobre 2011 relativo agli importi del contributo per il rilascio del permesso di soggiorno", (17A03919) (GU Serie Generale n.131 del 08-06-2017) at: [www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/06/08/17A03919/sg](http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/06/08/17A03919/sg)

46 Asgi also noted that the Decree "does not intervene on the reimbursement of what has been paid so far in excess of the criteria established by the Court of Justice of the European Union: the judicial dispute already in place will therefore continue for the restitution". See: [www.meltingpot.org/Torna-l-iniqua-tassa-sul-permesso-di-soggiorno.html-.WZ7WQnd-JYUQ](http://www.meltingpot.org/Torna-l-iniqua-tassa-sul-permesso-di-soggiorno.html-.WZ7WQnd-JYUQ)

## The murder of Muhammad Shahzad Khan in Torpignattara

Serena Chiodo

On September 18, 2014, around midnight, a man was beaten to death on the pavement of via Ludovico Pavoni, in the Roman district of Torpignattara. The victim is Muhammad Shahzad Khan, 28 years old of Pakistani origin. Two persons responsible for the murder were identified: Daniel Balducci, a 17-year-old Roman boy sentenced for voluntary murder, and his father, Maximilian Balducci, bartender, sentenced for accessory to manslaughter.

### What happened on the night of September 18, 2014?

Muhammad Shahzad Khan is walking alone in the streets of Torpignattara, chanting the Koran Suras. Massimiliano Balducci, disturbed by the prayers marked out loud by Muhammad, opens the window of his apartment on the third floor of Via Ludovico Pavoni, and throws a bottle of water at him covering him with insults. Then, the son of Massimiliano Balducci, 17-year-old Daniel, arrives by bicycle, together with a friend. His father spurs him to attack the Pakistani man. The boy hurls himself against Muhammad Shahzad Khan, beating him repeatedly.

Some people look out from their windows and shout out to the boy to stop: in response, the young man's father threatens them. The autopsy performed on the victim's body by the Institute of forensic medicine of the University "La Sapienza" of Rome reports of "a repeated contusion trauma of the head with right temporal fracture and diffused subarachnoid hemorrhage". Eyewitnesses confirm that they have seen the young man repeatedly beat the man, even after he fell to the ground, incited by his father. For the murder, the 17-year-old is sentenced to 8 years in prison, a sentence that has then been modified to 2 years in rehab. The father is sentenced to 21 years' imprisonment for voluntary murder, then reduced to 10 years. "Encouraging him to strike, it is as if the accused had armed his still minor son" said the Prosecutor Mario Palazzi during the indictment.<sup>1</sup> According to the prosecution, the father also tried to contaminate evidence, making sure that the son changed his t-shirt and replaced his sneakers with flip-flops.

1 See "Incitò il figlio, anche lui è un assassino", *la Repubblica*, December 8, 2015: [ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/12/08/incito-il-figlio-anche-lui-e-un-assassinoRoma16.html](http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/12/08/incito-il-figlio-anche-lui-e-un-assassinoRoma16.html)

### A distorted media perspective

What has just been described represents the facts of what occurred according to the investigators, who have taken note of the testimonies, of the results of the autopsy, of what emerged from the interrogations, in a reconstruction work that has lasted over time. The time-period of the investigations, however, does not always coincide with that of the media: several details and elements, which then proved to be unfounded, were immediately spread by media. According to some newspapers, Muhammad Shahzad Khan was a homeless, drunk and harassing man. He allegedly spat at the 17-year-old, who would have reacted by throwing him a punch, making the 28-year-old fall and causing the trauma to his head that killed him. "Rome, Pakistani kicked and punched during a controversy, 17-year-old detained: 'He spat at me'", titled *la Repubblica*, only to then, in the subtitle, specify that "from the first findings of the medical examiner, it emerged that the victim had received several violent blows".<sup>2</sup> *Il Fatto Quotidiano* also uses the 17 year-old's statement as a headline: "He spat in my face", continuing in the subtitle: "According to what was reconstructed by the *Carabinieri*, the 28 year old non-EU citizen was drunk and was in the Torpignattara area. The minor was arrested on charges of involuntary manslaughter. Any racial motive has been excluded".<sup>3</sup> details disseminated immediately after the murder, with investigations still in progress, impossible to verify. *La Stampa* speaks of "controversy ended in blood" with the headline "Punched to death by a 17-year-old for a spit" and describing the victim as "a 28-year-old Pakistani in a state of drunkenness that harassed passers-by".<sup>4</sup>

Many newspapers describe the victim as a problematic, drunk person who disturbed the neighborhood; just as many interpreted what happened as a dispute that broke out between the 17-year-old Roman and the young man of Pakistani origin, due to the behavior of the latter. A version which, on the one hand seems to blame the victim, on the other hand provides a kind of legitimization to the aggressor, minimizing what happened. A description of the facts which, however,

2 See "Roma, pakistano ucciso a calci e pugni durante una lite, fermato un 17enne: 'Mi aveva sputato'", *la Repubblica*, September 19, 2014: [roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/09/19/news/torpignattara\\_ucciso\\_di\\_botte\\_durante\\_una\\_lite\\_fermato\\_un\\_17enne-96136038/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/09/19/news/torpignattara_ucciso_di_botte_durante_una_lite_fermato_un_17enne-96136038/)

3 See "Roma, pakistano ucciso a pugni. Fermato un 17enne: 'Mi aveva sputato in faccia'", *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, September 19, 2014: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/09/19/roma-pakistano-ucciso-a-pugni-fermato-un-17enne-mi-aveva-sputato-in-faccia/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/09/19/roma-pakistano-ucciso-a-pugni-fermato-un-17enne-mi-aveva-sputato-in-faccia/)

4 See "Roma, ucciso a pugni da un 17enne per uno sputo", *La Stampa*, September 19, 2014: [www.lastampa.it/2014/09/19/italia/cronache/roma-pakistano-ucciso-a-pugni-da-un-17enne-fermato-il-ragazzo-mi-aveva-sputato-e-ho-reagito-KiAKoNos0PeU8lqvQIDJ/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2014/09/19/italia/cronache/roma-pakistano-ucciso-a-pugni-da-un-17enne-fermato-il-ragazzo-mi-aveva-sputato-e-ho-reagito-KiAKoNos0PeU8lqvQIDJ/pagina.html)

does not coincide with what happened. And that, even if true, could in no way justify the murder of a man.

What will be ascertained, however, is that Muhammad Shahzad Khan had been living in a reception center in Via Pietralata since August 30. He arrived in Italy at the age of 21, he had worked as a cook in an uncle's restaurant, the uncle then moved to London and Shahzad Khan lost his job. Not finding any other job, he started to sell flowers and lighters. Without any income, he turned to the Municipality of Rome, which found him a place in a reception center.

At the time of the aggression, the young Pakistani was going through a difficult period, due to the loss of work, the precarious housing conditions in which he was living, the lack of a social network, the absence of his family – a wife and a three months old son who he had never seen as he did not have the money to return to his country. The news of a family bereavement had aggravated his state of profound despair. This strong prostration, and not a harassing state of drunkenness, was the reason he walked alone praying aloud.

The media will give news of this in the following days, within a framework that will become increasingly different and articulated compared to the first generally widespread version. Indeed, the victim had not harassed anybody – except, yes, disturbing the sleep of residents in the neighborhood with his prayers. The autopsy will confirm that the young man wasn't drunk, and that the blows that killed him were many. "The new truth about Shahzad. Killed by kicks and punches, it was a ruthless beating", writes *la Repubblica* on October 5, 2014,<sup>5</sup> and again, in 2015, they describe the victim as "a very religious young man".<sup>6</sup>

Some newspapers rectify the details reported even though continuing to give information in an incorrect way: "a way to 'punish' the immigrant who drunkenly bothered passers-by with screams and disorderly conduct", writes *Il Messaggero*,<sup>7</sup> insisting on the alleged abuse of alcohol. "The murder is that of Muhammad Shahzad Khan, a 30-year-old Pakistani, who made two mistakes that September afternoon. The first to sing in the street while Balducci was resting. The second, spitting at the 17-year-old when, from the window, the father threw a

bottle of water at him",<sup>8</sup> writes *la Repubblica* on November 15, 2014, confirming the spit that, it seems, never happened.

The significant role of the aggressor's father also become increasingly clear. Many newspapers describe the incitements addressed to the son and threats made to witnesses: "That foreigner spit at my son who gave him a push and, so I told him 'give him a beating' as in defend yourself, not kill him. It was a misfortune. He must have hit his head", writes *Corriere della Sera* on December 7, 2015,<sup>9</sup> when the first sentence against the man was issued.

"Pakistani killed in Torpignattara. The court states: 'Daniel killed the man so as not to disappoint his father'",<sup>10</sup> writes *la Repubblica*, and then, on February 28, 2017 "Beat him up, kill him", the man yelled from the window",<sup>11</sup> when giving the news of the closing of the appeal process, in which the judges reformulated in 10 years of imprisonment – for voluntary murder aggravated by futile motives and the incitement of a minor to commit a crime – the sentence of the III Rome Court of Assizes, which in December 2015 had sentenced the man to 21 years for aggravated voluntary murder.

In addition to inciting his son to beat Shazhad Khan to death, the man threatened his neighbours. "The father defended his son by shouting against those who told him to stop and telling them 'come down communist shit if you have the courage' before the police, Carabinieri and ambulance arrived", writes a woman on Facebook, a post then published on the home page of the Comitato della Certosa and taken up by *Fan Page*.<sup>12</sup> "Spying rats", the man shouted outside the door, 'come out and I will beat you up. You will have to deal with me instead of my son'.<sup>13</sup>

8 See "Pakistano ucciso a Torpignattara. I giudici: 'Daniel lo ha massacrato per non deludere suo padre'", *la Repubblica*, November 15, 2014: [roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/11/15/news/pakistano\\_ucciso\\_a\\_torpignattara\\_i\\_giudici\\_daniel\\_lo\\_ha\\_massacrato\\_per\\_non\\_deludere\\_suo\\_padre-100591098/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/11/15/news/pakistano_ucciso_a_torpignattara_i_giudici_daniel_lo_ha_massacrato_per_non_deludere_suo_padre-100591098/)

9 See "Ammazzalo!: 21 anni al padre che istigò il figlio 17enne a uccidere", *Corriere della Sera*, December 7, 2015: [roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15\\_dicembre\\_07/torpignattara-omicidio-pakistano-condanna-sentenza-164944d2-9d0a-11e5-9189-eea9343a1b14.shtml?refresh\\_ce-cp](http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15_dicembre_07/torpignattara-omicidio-pakistano-condanna-sentenza-164944d2-9d0a-11e5-9189-eea9343a1b14.shtml?refresh_ce-cp)

10 See: [roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/11/15/news/pakistano\\_ucciso\\_a\\_torpignattara\\_i\\_giudici\\_daniel\\_lo\\_ha\\_massacrato\\_per\\_non\\_deludere\\_suo\\_padre-100591098/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/11/15/news/pakistano_ucciso_a_torpignattara_i_giudici_daniel_lo_ha_massacrato_per_non_deludere_suo_padre-100591098/)

11 See "Roma, istigò il figlio a picchiare immigrato: pena ridotta a 10 anni", *la Repubblica*, February 28, 2017: [roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/02/28/news/roma\\_istigo\\_il\\_figlio\\_a\\_picchiare\\_immigrato\\_pena\\_ridotta\\_a\\_10\\_anni-159449603/?ref=fbplrm](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/02/28/news/roma_istigo_il_figlio_a_picchiare_immigrato_pena_ridotta_a_10_anni-159449603/?ref=fbplrm)

12 See: "Torpignattara, arrestato il padre del 17enne che uccise un giovane pakistano", *fanpage.it*, October 14, 2014: [roma.fanpage.it/torpignattara-omicidio-pakistano-arresti/](http://roma.fanpage.it/torpignattara-omicidio-pakistano-arresti/)

13 See "Pakistano ucciso a Torpignattara. I giudici: 'Daniel lo ha massacrato per non deludere suo padre'", cit.

5 See: [www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/10/05/news/la\\_nuova\\_verit\\_su\\_shahzad\\_massacrato\\_a\\_calci\\_e\\_pugni\\_fu\\_un\\_pestaggio\\_a\\_freddo-97358702/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/10/05/news/la_nuova_verit_su_shahzad_massacrato_a_calci_e_pugni_fu_un_pestaggio_a_freddo-97358702/)

6 See: [www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/10/05/news/la\\_nuova\\_verit\\_su\\_shahzad\\_massacrato\\_a\\_calci\\_e\\_pugni\\_fu\\_un\\_pestaggio\\_a\\_freddo-97358702/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/10/05/news/la_nuova_verit_su_shahzad_massacrato_a_calci_e_pugni_fu_un_pestaggio_a_freddo-97358702/)

7 See: "Torpignattara, arrestato il padre del ragazzo che uccise a pugni un pakistano: 'Lo incitava dalla finestra'", *Il Messaggero*, October 14, 2014, [www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/pakistano\\_ucciso\\_torpignattara\\_padre\\_ragazzo\\_pugni-641191.html](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/pakistano_ucciso_torpignattara_padre_ragazzo_pugni-641191.html)

“Murder in via Pavoni: Maximilian Balducci sentenced to 21 years. Exacerbating circumstances are the intimidation of witnesses to events and the altered version provided to law enforcement agencies”.<sup>14</sup> “The man also seemed to have threatened his neighbours”.<sup>15</sup> Two of them – a couple – do not return to their apartment because of the threats they have been subjected to: a secondary element, which should instead make people reflect on the atmosphere in the area. According to *la Repubblica*, the two have preferred “a neighbourhood where, hopefully, when doing your duty as a citizen, you do not risk being called ‘spy’ or live with fear of retaliation”.<sup>16</sup> A phrase that risks discrediting an entire neighbourhood, ignoring the many elements that emerge from “an action of indescribable violence”, as pointed out by the investigating magistrate.<sup>17</sup>

“What took place on the night between 18 and 19 September might seem only a question of tabloid news and marginality in the southern outskirts of Rome, but it hides much more”, writes Giuliano Santoro on *il manifesto*, whose book *Al palo della morte. Storia di un omicidio in una periferia meticcina* (Edizioni Alegre, Roma 2015) reconstructs the context in which the murder was committed, namely that of Torpignattara, “a Roman border district, a frontier not only urban and social, but also cultural and imaginary”.

A neighborhood with a past and present history of immigration – initially people from Southern Italy, then from different countries, in particular Pakistan and Bangladesh – where many different social groups (historical residents, immigrants, students) live together, sharing the problems of a suburb that is burdened by the absence of institutions, especially social and cultural policies, and in which right-wing populisms are taking hold.<sup>18</sup>

14 See “Marranella: istigò il figlio a picchiare e uccidere immigrato, condannato a 21 anni”, *Roma Today*, October 8, 2015: [www.romatoday.it/cronaca/condanna-massimiliano-balducci-marranella.html](http://www.romatoday.it/cronaca/condanna-massimiliano-balducci-marranella.html)

15 See “Pakistano ucciso a Torpignattara. I giudici: ‘Daniel lo ha massacrato per non deludere suo padre’”, cit.

16 *Ibidem*

17 See “Pakistano ucciso a Torpignattara, Il gip: ‘Daniel uccise per obbedire alle richieste del padre’”, *Il Messaggero*, October 16, 2014, [www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/torpignattara\\_pakistano\\_ucciso\\_daniel\\_gip-644171.html](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/torpignattara_pakistano_ucciso_daniel_gip-644171.html)

18 The discussion of the subject would deserve more space, and this is not the place to deal with it. See in this regard, in addition to the above mentioned book by Giuliano Santoro, also G. Pierre Louis, “Qui a Tor Pignattara il multiculturalismo non è solo un problema, ma soprattutto una risorsa!”, November 27, 2015, [www.pontediferro.org/articolo.php?ID=3621](http://www.pontediferro.org/articolo.php?ID=3621); V. Mattioli e D. Burrocacao, “Cosa sta succedendo a Torpignattara?”, *Vice*, September 22, 2014: [www.vice.com/it/article/torpignattara-roma-settembre-2014-492](http://www.vice.com/it/article/torpignattara-roma-settembre-2014-492); G. Santoro, “Torpignattara è centrale”, *il manifesto*, September 22, 2014: [ilmanifesto.it/torpignat-](http://ilmanifesto.it/torpignat-)

A neighborhood where a 17-year-old, instigated by his father, killed a man. A case of violence that the media initially represented as the (incredibly) possible consequence of the attitude of a *foreigner*, a *clochard*, a *drunkard*, who later became a *mild man*, a *pizza maker*, a *religious boy*.

This case of violence has led to very different reactions.

### A divided neighbourhood...?

After the murder, the neighborhood of Torpignattara is animated by different, specular reactions. Banners in support of the 17-year-old who killed the young Pakistani man appear immediately. “Against everything and everyone, forever with you”, “A misfortune will not deprive you of freedom”, “Forgotten before being born, denigrated and abandoned after being born! These are the teenagers born in Marranella”: messages that partly show the condition of suffering and abandonment by institutions repeatedly denounced by associations in the neighborhood. On Sunday September 21, a group of people organize a demonstration of solidarity in favor of the arrested minor.<sup>19</sup>

The following Sunday, on September 28, other people, together with some associations operating in the area, set up an assembly in memory of the victim, to collect money for the repatriation of his body in Pakistan and invite the neighborhood not to be taken over by populism but to together build a community that is united and supportive, and that denounces the absence of institutional policies able to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.<sup>20</sup>

tara-e-centrale/; G. Santoro, “A spasso tra le contraddizioni del vicolo cieco di Tor Pignattara”, *il manifesto*, October 18, 2014: [ilmanifesto.it/a-spasso-tra-le-contraddizioni-nel-vicolo-cieco-di-torpignattara/](http://ilmanifesto.it/a-spasso-tra-le-contraddizioni-nel-vicolo-cieco-di-torpignattara/); R. Mondin, *Tor Pignattara*, available here: [www.academia.edu/29174069/Tor\\_Pignattara](http://www.academia.edu/29174069/Tor_Pignattara)

19 See “Uccise senz’atetto, quartiere in corteo per solidarietà al 17enne arrestato”, *Corriere della Sera*, September 21, 2014: [roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/14\\_settembre\\_21/uccise-senza-tetto-presidio-solidarieta-il-17enne-arrestato-00c8478c-41d7-11e4-a55b-96aa9d987f34.shtml](http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/14_settembre_21/uccise-senza-tetto-presidio-solidarieta-il-17enne-arrestato-00c8478c-41d7-11e4-a55b-96aa9d987f34.shtml) (see the video here: [video.corriere.it/uccise-senzatetto-quartiere-manifesta-lui/f236f2f8-423b-11e4-8cfb-eb1ef2f383c6](http://video.corriere.it/uccise-senzatetto-quartiere-manifesta-lui/f236f2f8-423b-11e4-8cfb-eb1ef2f383c6)); “Uccise un pachistano a calci e pugni, sit-in a Roma per il 17enne arrestato”, *la Repubblica*, September 21, 2014: [roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/09/21/news/uccise\\_un\\_pachistano\\_a\\_calci\\_e\\_pugni\\_sit-in\\_di\\_solidariet\\_per\\_il\\_17enne\\_arrestato-96353618/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/09/21/news/uccise_un_pachistano_a_calci_e_pugni_sit-in_di_solidariet_per_il_17enne_arrestato-96353618/)

20 See G. Santoro, “L’altra Torpignattara in corteo per Shahzad”, *DinamoPress*, September 27, 2014: [www.dinamopress.it/news/laltra-torpignattara-in-corteo-per-shahzad](http://www.dinamopress.it/news/laltra-torpignattara-in-corteo-per-shahzad). For a photographic documentation of the demonstration, see here: [simonagranati.photoshelter.com/gallery/Torpignattara-per-ricordare-Shahzad/G0000YK1GO0K9Tk/](http://simonagranati.photoshelter.com/gallery/Torpignattara-per-ricordare-Shahzad/G0000YK1GO0K9Tk/)



### The Silence of the Foreigner

This reconstruction lacks the voice of the victim's family: very few newspapers choose to listen, for example, to *Progetto Diritti's* lawyers who dealt with the case, representing Shahzad Khan's family.<sup>21</sup> In this way, the victim is also ignored, first insulted by an offensive media description that does not correspond to reality and then completely forgotten. A man in Italy for years, but alone, whose job was linked first to a sector now commonly associated with "immigrants" – domestic assistance – and then to the activity of a relative. A man who, losing the support of the uncle, returned to the condition of a migrant who has just arrived in Italy, "placed" in a reception center, without any network or support. A picture that, together with the brutal way in which he lost his life, should pose serious questions to institutions and society.

21 See "Torpignattara, omicidio Shahzad. Padre e figlio arrestati: amici li difendono, testimoni li accusano", *Blitz Quotidiano*, October 16, 2014: [www.blitzquotidiano.it/cronaca-italia/torpignattara-omicidio-shahzad-padre-e-figlio-arrestati-quartiere-li-difende-testimoni-li-accusano-1996649/](http://www.blitzquotidiano.it/cronaca-italia/torpignattara-omicidio-shahzad-padre-e-figlio-arrestati-quartiere-li-difende-testimoni-li-accusano-1996649/). Meanwhile, from a village in Pakistan the parents and wife of Muhammad Shahzad Khan have asked a Roman criminal lawyer to represent them as civilian parties. "They are distorted by pain. Khan was a mild young man, he had not yet seen his son, born four months ago," said lawyer Mario Angelelli, "They do not understand why he was killed in that way, without reason, in the street"

### A life for a rotten melon. The absurd murder of Sare Mamadou in Lucera

Paola Andrisani

On the night of September 21, 2015, Ferdinando and Raffaele Piacente, 65 and 27 years old, father and son, farmers and small fruit traders in Lucera, are asleep in their home in the district Vaccarella, in the countryside of Foggia. Taking advantage of the darkness, three young men, originally from Burkina Faso, secretly enter the Piacente estate in search of some fruit to eat. Dogs bark, the owners wake up and become aware of the intrusion. They immediately take up arms and approach the three migrants, screaming. They try to make them desist, and a brawl is born in which Raffaele Piacente is hit to the nose. At this point Raffaele's father, with a shotgun regularly detained, explodes some blows in the air. The three men, frightened, run towards the Fiat Uno they arrived with. Father and son then shoot at the wheels of the car, forcing the three to escape on foot. The chase begins. Other shots are fired: two, one at the arm and one at the back, kill Sare Mamadou, 37 years old. Adam Kadago receives a shot in the chest, while his third fellow countryman escapes through the fields.

The Piacente return undisturbed towards home. The man who managed to escape, Souleyman Sambare, stops and calls the Carabinieri and an ambulance. Kadago is transported as a matter of urgency and hospitalized in critical conditions at the Ospedali Riuniti in Foggia. The survivor tells everything to the Carabinieri, who in a few hours conclude their investigation and go to Piacente's house. Ferdinand and Raffaele do not oppose resistance, and are subjected to detention status. The two of them will have to answer for conspiracy to murder, attempted murder and illegal possession of weapons and ammunition found in their home. An autopsy will be performed on the body of Sare Mamadou.

This official reconstruction of the story is immediately and courageously questioned by the testimony of another farm worker of Ivorian nationality, at the microphones of Foggia Città Aperta<sup>1</sup>. Only a few days after the murder, this is the most faithful version of what tragically happened. That is to say: the three men were attacked, insulted and chased for at least nine kilometers, and then

1 See "Omicidio Lucera, spunta un'altra versione: 'Non è stato un furto, avevano chiesto il permesso e Sare è morto per tre meloni marci'", September 22, 2015, [foggiacittaaperta.it](http://foggiacittaaperta.it).

shot at from behind. They had not, therefore, been found inside the field by the landowner, as was initially revealed in the testimony given by the attackers.

The three, that morning, had left the Gran Ghetto<sup>2</sup> of Rignano Garganico in a white Fiat Uno in search of work in the Foggia countryside, and while walking, seeing some melons – including some very rotten ones – had asked a farmer if they could have some. The man had replied in the affirmative, not least because they would soon be thrown away. Immediately afterwards, the son of the landowner had arrived, and had begun to insult the three men, accusing them of “stealing” the melons. Hence, the heated quarrel and then the murder.

The tragic case ignites the debate on social media among the supporters of the “legitimate defense” who almost “thank” the farmers of Lucera for having killed a “thief”, what is more a “migrant”. To side with the Piacente, are mainly the farmers from the Foggia area, who are struggling with the repeated theft and threats of a territory without rules and controls. They claim to be forced to “defend themselves” by hiring private security guards or carrying out patrols. They feel tired, frightened, alone and abandoned, under attack of criminals. They want more control and more security. Otherwise, they say, one should not be scandalized by the “consequences”, sometimes even dramatic, of a theft.

Even more serious is the *ad hoc* highlighting by the media the headlines of the few articles published on the case, marking Mamadou as a “melon thief”,<sup>3</sup> moreover foreign.

What is certain is that in Italy, in 2015, it is not acceptable to die in this way. According to the collective Pro/Fuga, who has followed the story very closely, “the mirror of a society in economic and social crisis for which a person’s life is not worth the price of a melon. The conviction that the ‘melon thieves’, as immigrants, are criminals who deserve to be shot in the back – continues the collective in their statement – is the result of the social hatred strongly desired by those who want to distract us, by those who want to divide us”.

In the days following the murder, after the assembly in the ghetto of Rignano,

2 For those who do not know it, this is a huge slum made up mostly of constructions in cardboard and plastic, where migrants who work for a few euros a day in the fields live. The complex, which does not have electricity and whose only “comfort” are the chemical baths and tanks containing drinking water, hosts a variable number of people, depending on the season and the need for labor: from a minimum of 1,500 to peaks of 3,000 migrants in summer, mostly men, but also women, from Sub-Saharan Africa.

3 See “Foggia, uccidono un immigrato che rubava meloni dai campi: fermati padre e figlio”, *repubblica.it*, September 22, 2015; “Lucera, immigrato ucciso mentre ruba i meloni Arrestati agricoltore e figlio”, *lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it*, September 22, 2015; “Foggia, sorprende i ladri in azione: ne uccide uno a fucilate. Aveva rubato due meloni”, *ilmattino.it*, September 22, 2015.

the Embassy of Burkina sends representatives from Rome to provide assistance to the two survivors and to organize a big demonstration, together with Flai Cgil Puglia. On September 30, 2015, in fact, a demonstration,<sup>4</sup> in which many migrants participate, parade through the streets of Foggia to the cry of “Truth and Justice for Mamadou Sare” and “Stop the *caporalato*<sup>5</sup> and exploitation” (two plagues unfortunately still very present throughout the Italian agricultural sector, as reported several times by trade unions<sup>6</sup> and associations<sup>7</sup>).

Meanwhile, Kadago Adam’s conditions are not life-threatening, but he risks having to live with a cartridge of rifle stuck in his chest forever: the doctors have decided not to operate as the risks are too high.

The hypothesis of “theft” remains rather unlikely: at the time of the events, the melons were not in “season”, but only a residual of the previous harvests. The investigation of the case has practically been completed, but the strong xenophobic matrix<sup>8</sup> behind this crime has not been highlighted at all.

This episode, in its immense gravity, is only the tip of the iceberg of a reality, that of the exploitation of foreign labourers. Mamadou is just one of the many victims of the *caporalato*.<sup>9</sup> The summer of 2015 holds a sad record: between June

4 See “A Foggia sfila la rabbia contro l’uccisione di Mamadou: ‘Non si può morire per un melone’”, *foggiatoday.it*, September 30, 2015.

5 Illegal recruitment of agricultural workers for very low wages, *translator’s note*.

6 The annual reports produced by Flai Cgil *Agromafie e caporalato* can be consulted for further information or those managed by Coldiretti and Eurispes *Agromafie*.

7 In this regard, for example, Medici per i diritti umani (Medu) drafted in 2015 *Terraingiusta*. A report on living and working conditions of foreign agricultural workers. Following the cycle of the agricultural seasons the Medu teams moved from the Piana di Gioia Tauro in Calabria to the Piana di Sele in Campania, from Vulture Alto Bradano in Basilicata to Agro Pontino in Lazio. The report is the result of testimonies and data collected over eleven months, in five areas of central and southern Italy, the report denounces the dramatic topicality of the conditions of exploitation of migrant workers in agriculture: undeclared work or work marked by serious social security irregularities, low salaries, *caporalato*, excessive working hours, lack of safety and health protection, difficulty in accessing healthcare, and disastrous housing and sanitation situations. The Report is available here: [www.mediciperidirittumani.org/pdf/Terraingiusta.pdf](http://www.mediciperidirittumani.org/pdf/Terraingiusta.pdf)

8 The murder dynamics almost resemble an execution, as the boys dared to react and strike those who had accused them of theft on the basis of racist prejudice that “all foreigners steal”.

9 The victims of the *caporalato* are also fully among those who have died at work, even though official statistics ignore them. On October 19, 2016, the new law against the *caporalato* was finally approved, which provides for the tougher penalties for *caporali*, but also for illegal intermediaries, confiscation of assets as is the case with mafia organizations, arrest in flagrante, compensation for victims and a plan of intervention to welcome agricultural workers. The measure, ordered by the Minister of Agricultural Policies Maurizio Martina, reformulates the crime of the *caporalato* and provides, for employers and intermediaries who exploit workers,

and September alone, at least 9 people<sup>10</sup> (3 Italians<sup>11</sup>, 4 Romanian citizens<sup>12</sup> and 2 other Africans<sup>13</sup>) died of heatstroke, fatigue and hardship between the camps and the ghettos, from South to North. And there is no shortage of other deaths in the following years.

Among the many victims of this silent war, we remember Talla Seck, a 56-year-old Senegalese citizen killed by carbon monoxide fumes from his improvised charcoal stove in a tent town near Andria on February 3, 2016; Singh, a 24-year-old Indian citizen, laborer in the countryside on the plain of Fondi, in South Pontine, who hanged himself with the white wire of a television antenna in his home on April 1, 2016; Ivan Miecoganuchev, 20 years old, who died carbonised in the Bulgari Ghetto on December 9, 2016; two Malian citizens, Mamadou Konate and Nouhou Doumbia, died as a result of a fire, perhaps arson, at the Gran Ghetto of Rignano on March 2, 2017.

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taking advantage of their state of need, imprisonment from 1 to 6 years and a fine from 500 to 1,000 euros for each worker recruited.

10 To these must be added the sad and tragic death of a thirty-year-old arms originally from Mali, who worked in the countryside of Rignano Garganico, near Foggia, whose name is not even known and whose corpse would have been hidden by the *caporali*. The young man would have died “collapsing into one of the 57 tomato crates he had collected”, as reported by Flai Cgil Puglia’s immigration coordinator, Yvan Sagnet. But the news, as usual, did not make any noise (*today.it*, August 26, 2015).

11 Paola Clemente, 49 years old, died on July 13, while she was working on the mulling of grapes in the countryside near Andria. Maria Lemma, 39 years old, dies before Ferragosto, even if the story became known a week later. Her case has didn’t make the news, since the family decides not to make a complaint because “the woman was already suffering from various diseases”. On September 9, Arcangelo De Marco died, who was working in the vineyards for the same interim agency of Paola Clemente, following a sickness that had struck him three weeks earlier. It is not yet clear where exactly he was working that day, whether in the area of Andria, Puglia, or in Metaponto, Basilicata.

12 George Barbieru, a Romanian citizen who died on July 6, in Belfiore, province of Verona, according to the local press (his case never arrived to the national one) would have died after having done a few hundred meters by bicycle, at the end of a morning of work. The newspapers write that he was hired as a laborer for a week by a farm for work in the orchard. Vasile Tusa, 36 years old, a Romanian farm labourer, dies on August 9, at the hospital in Crotona, a few days after feeling ill at the end of his workday. On August 13, in Carmagnola, province of Turin, Ioan Puscasu, a 47-year-old Romanian citizen, dies, who according to the press was working in a very hot greenhouse of green beans. Stefan Cincu, 59 years old, also a Romanian citizen, dies on June 11, on his return from a day in the camps in the province of Ragusa. Of him, the press writes that “he had told his employer that he did not feel good and he was allowed to go home early”, but also states that “he was an assiduous alcohol consumer”.

13 On July 20, 2015, Mohammed Abdullah, a Sudanese citizen, dies in the countryside of Nardò, in the province of Lecce, while picking tomatoes. Zakaria Ben Hasine, a Tunisian citizen of 52, with his wife and four children, died on August 3 at the farm where he worked in Polignano, in the province of Bari.

A plague, then, that of the *caporalato*, which strikes and kills in the most subtle and indirect ways.<sup>14</sup> A “war bulletin” that is often relegated only to local newspapers.

The tragedy of Mamadou certainly had the “merit” of drawing the attention of the media to the longstanding situation of exploitation and of the Apulian and national *caporalato*. But as happens cyclically every year, we return to talk about ghettos and *caporali* only when there are serious events, such as the death of Mamadou Sare. Then the spotlight goes out again, the *caporali* return to their dirty business and go unpunished, while countless continue to be exploited and discriminated against in the deafening silence of the sunny fields between Puglia, Basilicata and Calabria.

For Mamadou Sare, there is still no justice. In July 2016, Ferdinando Piacente was granted house arrest, while, in November 2016, the Public Prosecutor Laura Simeone, during the trial with an abbreviated rite, asked for life imprisonment for Ferdinando (as also accused of the attempted murder of Kadago Adam) and 20 years imprisonment for his son Raffaele. The trial phase continues in December 2016, with the defensive arrangements of the two defendants. The judgment was expected in early 2017. But nothing is yet known. And the press remains silent until, unfortunately, the next tragic new event occurs.

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14 With regard to the transversality with which the *caporalato* can act and strike, we can also remember the murder of Sekine Traore, originally from Mali, 27 years old, killed by a projectile in the abdomen shot by a Carabinieri in the tentpolis of San Ferdinando, near Rosarno (Reggio Calabria), on June 8, 2016. Or, more recently, the death of a farm worker from Burkina Faso in Capua (Caserta), who, after having finished picking tomatoes in a camp, is hit by a car, while riding his bike on his way home on March 13, 2017.

## Palermo: the courage of Yusupha Susso

Serena Chiodo

It is April 2, 2016, a Saturday, late afternoon. In Palermo, in the Ballarò district, three university students, of Gambian origin, are walking together talking. A scooter with two young people on board reaches them at full speed grazing them, risking investing them. The students shout out to be careful: they receive insults and invectives in response. The situation deteriorates immediately. Some men arrive: in a dozen or so they surround the students and attack them with kicks and punches. A man leaves the group. He returns with a gun. Fires. A student falls to the ground.

Only then does the group breaks up, while the man who fired escapes aboard a scooter driven by another man.

The student was shot in the head: he is urgently admitted in the intensive care unit of the hospital *Civico*, where he is kept for days in a pharmacological coma. He is Yusupha Susso, a 21-year-old from Gambian, a university student and cultural mediator. His conditions are extremely critical, so it is with great astonishment and happiness that doctors see a marked improvement. After less than a week, Yusupha's conditions are no longer life-threatening.

Meanwhile, thanks to the images taken by a fixed camera installed in Via Maqueda – the place of aggression – and to the testimonies of the student's friends<sup>1</sup>, the investigations starts to shed a light on what happened.

The police identify Emanuele Rubino, a 28-year-old man from Palermo, as the man who fired the gun, he is arrested on charges of attempted murder. In July 2016, his brother, Giuseppe Rubino, 44 years old, will also be arrested by an order of pre-trial detention in jail on charges of conspiracy to commit murder. According to the investigators, it was he who was the first to chase after the young immigrant and blocking him while his brother shoots him at the back of his neck.<sup>2</sup>

1 See “Ballarò, il racconto dei testimoni. ‘Così quel giovane ha sparato a Yusupha’”, *la Repubblica*, April 6, 2016: [palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/04/06/news/l\\_aggressione\\_di\\_ballaro\\_il\\_racconto\\_dei\\_testimoni\\_cosi\\_quel\\_giovane\\_ha\\_sparato\\_ha\\_yusupha\\_-136928245/](http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/04/06/news/l_aggressione_di_ballaro_il_racconto_dei_testimoni_cosi_quel_giovane_ha_sparato_ha_yusupha_-136928245/)

2 See “Sparatoria in via Maqueda, arrestato un complice”, *la Repubblica*, July 30, 2016: [palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/07/30/news/sparatoria\\_in\\_via\\_maqueda\\_arrestato\\_un\\_complice-145067481/](http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/07/30/news/sparatoria_in_via_maqueda_arrestato_un_complice-145067481/)

## Media trivialization

“Futile motives”, “A fight between immigrants”, “A petty argument”: in this way various newspapers, local and not, decide to give the news<sup>3</sup>, representing the situation as a disagreement ended badly. Some insisted in particular on the involvement of “foreign nationals”.<sup>4</sup>

The investigation will reveal the real dynamics of the facts: “Yusupha has been the victim of a violent aggression. He and his friends were attacked by some young men. They decided not to run away, but to assert their dignity and managed to chase off the attackers. These, not accepting defeat, went on to call the boss of the neighbourhood who fired four shots in cold blood. These are the cruel facts”<sup>5</sup>, so Vincenzo Gervasi, a civil action lawyer who assists the young student, summarizes what happened: “a real raid”.<sup>6</sup> Yusupha was in fact shot in the head after reacting energetically to those who wanted to subjugate him and his two friends with offenses and violence.

According to the head of the investigating team “we are faced with acts of bullying of unprecedented violence, with typically mafia-like attitudes. The raid was aimed at who had stood up against them”.<sup>7</sup> A point of view confirmed by the Commissioner, who emphasizes that “a shooting on a Saturday afternoon, in via Maqueda, is not a normal fact, and demonstrates the overwhelming

3 See “Rissa e sparatoria in pieno centro, gravemente ferito un immigrato”, *Live Sicilia*, April 2, 2016: [m.livesicilia.it/2016/04/02/rissa-e-sparatoria-in-pieno-centro-gravemente-ferito-un-immigrato\\_734099/](http://m.livesicilia.it/2016/04/02/rissa-e-sparatoria-in-pieno-centro-gravemente-ferito-un-immigrato_734099/); “Scoppia rissa in pieno centro, ferito extracomunitario”, *Palermo Today*, April 2, 2016: [www.palermotoday.it/cronaca/via-maqueda-rissa-ferito.html](http://www.palermotoday.it/cronaca/via-maqueda-rissa-ferito.html); “Palermo, rissa e spari in via Fiume: ferito immigrato 21enne”, *la Repubblica*, April 2, 2016: [palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/04/02/news/palermo\\_rissa\\_e\\_spari\\_in\\_via\\_fiume\\_ferito\\_un-immigrato\\_21enne-136778286/](http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/04/02/news/palermo_rissa_e_spari_in_via_fiume_ferito_un-immigrato_21enne-136778286/); “Rissa a Ballarò, extracomunitario ferito con colpo pistola: un fermo”, *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, April 4, 2016: [corrieredelmezzogiorno.corriere.it/palermo/cronaca/16\\_aprile\\_04\\_rissa-ballaro-extracomunitario-ferito-colpo-pistola-fermo-e69c9164-fa45-11e5-897a-cf9e4b9e7d0b.shtml](http://corrieredelmezzogiorno.corriere.it/palermo/cronaca/16_aprile_04_rissa-ballaro-extracomunitario-ferito-colpo-pistola-fermo-e69c9164-fa45-11e5-897a-cf9e4b9e7d0b.shtml)

4 See “Palermo, sparatoria in pieno centro durante una rissa: ferito extracomunitario”, *Giornale di Sicilia*, April 2, 2016: [palermo.gds.it/2016/04/02/palermo-sparatoria-in-pieno-centro-durante-una-rissa-extracomunitario-rimane-ferito\\_495356/](http://palermo.gds.it/2016/04/02/palermo-sparatoria-in-pieno-centro-durante-una-rissa-extracomunitario-rimane-ferito_495356/)

5 See “Il branco di Ballarò contro un giovane del Gambia, un fermo per tentato omicidio”, *la Repubblica*, April 4, 2016: [palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/04/04/news/rissa\\_con\\_sparatoria\\_tra\\_giovani\\_di\\_ballaro\\_e\\_del\\_gambia\\_un\\_fermato-136868284/](http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/04/04/news/rissa_con_sparatoria_tra_giovani_di_ballaro_e_del_gambia_un_fermato-136868284/)

6 See “Choc a Palermo, spara in testa a un giovane del Gambia in pieno centro: arrestato”, *Il Messaggero*, April 4, 2016: [www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/palermo\\_spara\\_testa\\_gambiano\\_arrestato-1647809.html](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/palermo_spara_testa_gambiano_arrestato-1647809.html); “Il raid contro gli immigrati dopo la rissa: ‘Spari per far capire chi comanda’”, *Palermo Today*, April 4, 2016: [www.palermotoday.it/cronaca/tentato-omicidio-sparatoria-via-fiume-retroscena.html](http://www.palermotoday.it/cronaca/tentato-omicidio-sparatoria-via-fiume-retroscena.html)

7 See “Il branco di Ballarò contro un giovane del Gambia, un fermo per tentato omicidio”, cit.



power of a certain group of subjects who think they have the dominion on the territory”.<sup>8</sup>

### Society immediately reacts to the violence and to the political and media exploitation

Immediately after the news spread, some groups oppose the medias’ definition of “brawl”, and the trivialization that follows. “It was not a brawl between ‘immigrants’. Saturday, April 2, in Via Fiume, Palermo, three young Gambians were attacked by a group of six Italians”;<sup>9</sup> this is the statement issued by twelve Palermo associations, determined that what happened in the Sicilian capital should not be passed over in silence. “It is very serious that a certain press has immediately reported the fact as ‘a brawl among immigrants’ without seeking the appropriate feedback, giving the opportunity to foment racist hatred in many online comments that have manipulated the false news”,<sup>10</sup> the associations denounce.

The reference, in particular, is to the comments on the blog of Francesco Voza – provincial referent in Palermo of the movement *Noi con Salvini* – who reported the news as a “maxi brawl among migrants”: “*All the filth arriving by boat*”, “*they are also carrying guns*”, “*throw them all out*”, some comments on the blog.<sup>11</sup>

According to the associations what happened “is only the last act of a series of submerged episodes of bullying and intolerance”.<sup>12</sup> A situation against which some Palermo groups – many of which particularly present in the Ballarò district – try to react, coming together in a public assembly attended by citizens, associations, children and teachers from the schools in the area, representatives of the cultural council, clubs, the Forum Antirazzista, *Palermo Pride*, *Sos Ballarò* and many others.

8 *Ibidem*.

9 See press release entitled “Non è stata una rissa tra ‘extracomunitari’”, circulated by Forum antirazzista palermitano, Laici comboniani di Palermo, Arci Palermo, L’altro diritto Sicilia, Centro salesiano Santa Chiara, Associazione Diritti e Frontiere, Federazione Cobas, Borderline Sicilia-Europe, Ciss, Osservatorio discriminazioni razziali Nouredine Adnane, Emmaus Palermo, Addiopizzo, available here: [www.facebook.com/notes/ciss-ong/cs-non-è-stata-una-rissa-tra-extracomunitari/10153723074887968/](http://www.facebook.com/notes/ciss-ong/cs-non-è-stata-una-rissa-tra-extracomunitari/10153723074887968/)

10 See “Non è una rissa, è violenza pura: in fin di vita Y.S., 21 anni”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, April 4, 2016: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/palermo-aggressione/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/palermo-aggressione/)

11 News is no longer available on the blog.

12 See “Non è una rissa, è violenza pura: in fin di vita Y.S., 21 anni”, cit.

The meeting culminates in the organization, on April 9, of the demonstration<sup>13</sup> “With Ballarò. Against all forms of violence”,<sup>14</sup> in which many people participate, challenging the pouring rain and the voices of those who, instead, from the windows, shouts “worthless” and “get off the street and no one shoots you”.<sup>15</sup> The Mayor Leoluca Orlando also participates, representing the Municipality that will be a civil party in the trial.

The association *Sos Ballarò* makes an interesting analysis of articles on the march published by *la Repubblica*: in the print version, the headline speaks of an event ignored by the inhabitants of Ballarò, while the online version on the contrary underlines the success of the demonstration in which “half Ballarò” participated.<sup>16</sup> According to the association one can find “a logic of a forced scoop and sensationalist news, aimed perhaps at selling some more copies” at the basis of the choice of *la Repubblica* to entitle the article “In procession for Yusupha but Ballarò deserts”, “despite this desertion is not mentioned in the much more balanced body of the article. We at *Sos Ballarò* ask ourselves: who benefits from this manipulation of facts? Surely, and of this we are sure, not to that community made up of children, families, traders and the many migrant and native inhabitants who live in Ballarò and who yesterday, despite the heavy rain, decided to take to the streets shouting their NO to violence”.<sup>17</sup>

### The courage of Yusupha is an example for all

“An aggression that fits into a context of widespread violence, which increasingly pervades our city, finding in the weaker subjects, like many migrants, the first victims and the main scapegoats”.<sup>18</sup>

This is a statement from the associations promoting the demonstration,

13 See “Palermo in marcia per Yusupha, contro razzismo e violenza”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, April 7, 2016: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/palermo-manifestazione-yusupha/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/palermo-manifestazione-yusupha/)

14 See press release entitled “Ballarò dice no alla violenza e marcia per Yusupha” by associazione *Sos Ballarò* del April 6, 2016, available here: [www.sosballaro.it/ballarò-dice-no-alla-violenza-e-marcia-per-yusupha/](http://www.sosballaro.it/ballarò-dice-no-alla-violenza-e-marcia-per-yusupha/)

15 See In marcia per la pace, “Palermo non spara, a Palermo si studia!”, *Iostudionews.it*, April 10, 2016: [www.iostudionews.it/palermo-non-spara-a-palermo-si-studia/](http://www.iostudionews.it/palermo-non-spara-a-palermo-si-studia/)

16 See the comparison between the two articles proposed by the association *Sos ballarò* on their Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/SOSBallaro/photos/a.182250675454164.1073741828.181803802165518/253815348297696/?type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/SOSBallaro/photos/a.182250675454164.1073741828.181803802165518/253815348297696/?type=3&theater)

17 See the note published by *Sos Ballarò* on their Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/SOSBallaro/photos/a.182250675454164.1073741828.181803802165518/253178401694724/?type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/SOSBallaro/photos/a.182250675454164.1073741828.181803802165518/253178401694724/?type=3&theater)

18 See “Non è una rissa, è violenza pura: in fin di vita Y.S., 21 anni”, cit.

outlining a context that emerges forcefully after the aggression on Yusupha, or rather his courage. After the attempted murder, and after the expressions of solidarity, some workers of foreign origin resident in Ballarò, who have been harassed for years by extortion, threats and violence, finally find the strength to report the situation.

In particular, thirteen workers of foreign origin report blackmailers, leading to the arrest, at the end of May 2016, of ten people accused of extortion, fire, robbery, private violence, personal injury and attempted murder: all crimes aggravated by the mafia methods and racist discrimination, as they are committed against workers of foreign origin, mainly from Bangladesh.<sup>19</sup>

The continuation of the investigations has also led to the emergence of violence and theft against tourists and citizens: crimes for which in October 2016, five people – accused of criminal association – were arrested, all answering to Emanuele Rubino.<sup>20</sup>

The name given by the agents to the operation is indicative: “via Maqueda”, the road where Yusupha almost lost his life for having rebelled against yet another act of oppression. Winning.

19 See “Palermo, gli immigrati si ribellano: dieci arresti nel quartiere Ballarò”, *Giornale di Sicilia*, May 23, 2016: [palermo.gds.it/2016/05/23/gli-immigrati-si-ribellano-ai-boss-dieci-arresti-nel-quartiere-ballaro\\_516293/](http://palermo.gds.it/2016/05/23/gli-immigrati-si-ribellano-ai-boss-dieci-arresti-nel-quartiere-ballaro_516293/); “Estorsioni mafiose aggravate dal razzismo: arresti e confische a Palermo”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, October 18, 2016: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/palermo-ballaro-mafia-razzismo](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/palermo-ballaro-mafia-razzismo)

20 Si veda “Rapine e assalti in banca, scattano cinque arresti a Ballarò”, *Live Sicilia*, October 21, 2016: [livesicilia.it/2016/10/21/palermo-arrestati-rapinatori-emanuele-rubino\\_793624/](http://livesicilia.it/2016/10/21/palermo-arrestati-rapinatori-emanuele-rubino_793624/); “Rapine e assalti ai turisti, fermata la banda di Ballarò: 5 arresti”, *Giornale di Sicilia*, October 21, 2016: [palermo.gds.it/2016/10/21/rapine-in-banca-e-assalti-ai-turisti-fermata-la-banda-di-ballaro-5-arresti\\_579605/](http://palermo.gds.it/2016/10/21/rapine-in-banca-e-assalti-ai-turisti-fermata-la-banda-di-ballaro-5-arresti_579605/)

## Murder in Fermo

Serena Chiodo

It is July 5, 2016, it is late afternoon, and in Fermo, in the Marche region, a couple is walking in the city centre, near the belvedere. They are two Nigerian citizens, Emmanuel Chidi Nnamdi and Chinyere Nnamdi. Not far away, two men are waiting for the bus. One of the two yells something to the woman: “African Monkey” and other insults. Emmanuel reacts. A brawl ensues. Emmanuel Nnamdi falls to the ground. The man who struck him does not stop and keeps hitting him once, twice or several times. He continues even when Emmanuel is on the ground, he is using a pole for road signs.

Finally, two municipal police officers, who are not far from the scene, intervene; an ambulance arrives. Emmanuel is hospitalized in desperate conditions. A five-day prognosis is diagnosed in Chinyere. At 8 p. m., doctors declare the brain death of 36 year-old Emmanuel Nnamdi.

The Police opens a file on this event. Two men are arrested and questioned. One is interviewed as a witness. The other is indicted for manslaughter: it is Amedeo Mancini, a 35-year old from Fermo, already subjected to a four years Daspo<sup>1</sup> because of past violent episodes, he is a supporter of the Fermana football club and a member of extreme right-wing groups.<sup>2</sup>

### The victims

“It has been a gratuitous and intentional provocation”.<sup>3</sup> Thus Don Vinicio Albanesi, coordinator of the hosting project managed by the Caritas Foundation In Veritate, which is a civil party in the case “as the agency to which the two boys were entrusted”. It was in the context of this project, in fact, that Emmanuel and Chinyere were in Fermo, housed in the structure called “The Seminar”. Just a few months earlier Don Vinicio had married the two, with a religious function devoid of civil effects, waiting for their residence permits.

1 The “Daspo” prohibits the person deemed to be dangerous from entering places where certain sporting events take place, translator’s note.

2 For a chronicle of the events, see “Il razzismo c’è. E uccide”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, July 7, 2016: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-razzismo-ce-e-uccide/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-razzismo-ce-e-uccide/)

3 See, “In fuga da Boko Haram, insultato e picchiato: è in coma irreversibile”, *Comunità di Capodarco*, July 6, 2016: [www.comunitadicapodarco.it/in-fuga-da-boko-haram-insultato-e-picchiato-e-in-coma-irreversibile/](http://www.comunitadicapodarco.it/in-fuga-da-boko-haram-insultato-e-picchiato-e-in-coma-irreversibile/)

Emmanuel and Chinyere were in fact waiting the response of the Commission for the recognition of international protection, to which they had applied after fleeing their country, Nigeria: there, during the attack on a church, the terrorist group Boko Haram had killed part of their family. The two had crossed Niger and Libya, where the woman had lost their son as a result of the beatings received. Afterwards, the sea, and then Italy: Palermo, and finally Fermo. Where they were trying to start a new life.

### Misrepresentations and “slander”

From the beginning, the majority of local and national media give and distorted representation of the events, which are generally described as a “brawl”.<sup>4</sup> Many emphasize the aggressor’s belonging to ultras football circles, omitting his affiliation to extreme right-wing political circles.<sup>5</sup> Ignoring the racist motive, some people try to blame the victim’s wife for having provided a version that is not consistent with what some witnesses have said; several people will say that the suspect had actually reacted to the aggression of Emmanuel Nniad, who had hit him with an iron post after, this was true, having heard racist insults.

According to the widow, however, Mancini physically assaulted her husband after having yelled the insults against her.<sup>6</sup> Most of the media – local and nation-

4 See “Fermo, fermato l’ultra con il vizio delle risse. Il fratello: ‘L’insulto? Era solo una battuta’”, *La Stampa*, July 8, 2016: [www.lastampa.it/2016/07/08/italia/cronache/ultra-con-il-vizio-delle-risse-il-fratello-linsulto-una-battuta-2enP1LyIHZs1Jfhc8kkB8H/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2016/07/08/italia/cronache/ultra-con-il-vizio-delle-risse-il-fratello-linsulto-una-battuta-2enP1LyIHZs1Jfhc8kkB8H/pagina.html); “Fermo, ultra accusato di omicidio”, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 settembre 2016: [www.corriere.it/cronache/16\\_settembre\\_13/fermo-ultra-accusato-omicidio-rinvii-andra-domiciliari-245ea722-7975-11e6-8c12-dd8263fa3b6d.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/16_settembre_13/fermo-ultra-accusato-omicidio-rinvii-andra-domiciliari-245ea722-7975-11e6-8c12-dd8263fa3b6d.shtml)

5 See, “Migrante ucciso a Fermo, ultra patteggia 4 anni di carcere”, *TgCom24*, January 17, 2017: [www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/cronaca/marche/migrante-ucciso-a-fermo-ultra-patteggia-4-anni-di-carcere\\_3052144-201702a.shtml](http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/cronaca/marche/migrante-ucciso-a-fermo-ultra-patteggia-4-anni-di-carcere_3052144-201702a.shtml); “Fermo, nigeriano muore dopo aggressione ultra”, *Il Messaggero*, July 7, 2016: [www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/fermo\\_bombe\\_chiesa\\_nigeriano\\_picchiato\\_ultra-1840528.html](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/fermo_bombe_chiesa_nigeriano_picchiato_ultra-1840528.html); “Nigeriano ucciso a Fermo, l’ultra si difende. ‘In cella con dei neri, siamo amici’”, *il Resto del Carlino*, July 24, 2016: [www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/fermo/cronaca/nigeriano-ucciso-fermo-mancini-1.2372248](http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/fermo/cronaca/nigeriano-ucciso-fermo-mancini-1.2372248); “Fermo, gli amici difendono l’ultra: ‘L’insulto? Solo una battuta’”, *Il Secolo XIX*, July 8, 2016: [www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2016/07/08/ASq7SnPD-insulto\\_difendono\\_battuta.shtml](http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2016/07/08/ASq7SnPD-insulto_difendono_battuta.shtml)

6 See “Fermo, la versione dei testimoni: ‘I nigeriani hanno aggredito’”, *Il Giornale*, July 7, 2016: [www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-versione-dei-testimoni-i-nigeriani-hanno-aggredito-1280812.html](http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-versione-dei-testimoni-i-nigeriani-hanno-aggredito-1280812.html); “Rissa a Fermo, ‘la versione della compagna non è attendibile’”, *ImolaOggi*, July 12, 2016: [www.imolaoggi.it/2016/07/12/rissa-a-fermo-la-versione-della-compagna-non-e-attendibile/](http://www.imolaoggi.it/2016/07/12/rissa-a-fermo-la-versione-della-compagna-non-e-attendibile/); “Fermo, ora sei testimoni smentiscono la donna”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, July 13, 2016: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/premium/articoli/fermo-ora-sei-testimoni-smentiscono-la-donna/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/premium/articoli/fermo-ora-sei-testimoni-smentiscono-la-donna/); “Fermo, il testimone accusa la vedova: ‘Così ha scatenato la rissa’”, *Il Giornale*, July 16, 2016: [www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-l-testimone-ora-accusa-ad-aggregare-sta-](http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-l-testimone-ora-accusa-ad-aggregare-sta-)

al – that initially minimize the extent of what happened, then try to delegitimize Chinyere Nniad and Emmanuel, even surmising their presumed affiliation – later denied – to the Nigerian mafia, members of the Black Axe cult.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the ultras of the Fermana organize a fund-raiser to support Mancini. Even before the case goes to trial, a social and media trial gets underway to the detriment of the victim and his widowed wife. While awaiting the outcome of the investigation, many media prefer silence to a narrative that suggests where to stand: on the side of the aggressor.

This is the context of the initiative promoted by the Councilors of the 5 Stars Movement Marco Mochi and Marco Temperini, who in an oral question asked the administration “if, following the ongoing investigations, there is a completely different scenario from the one initially given for certain, does the municipality intend to file for damages to the image of the city against whomever should be held responsible for the media exploitation of the serious fact; what actions the administration intends to carry out in order to promote integration and avoid similar incidents in the future; what actions the administration intends to carry out in order to restore the image of a welcoming city that Fermo has always had”.<sup>8</sup>

It will be the expert’s report published in September by the Carabinieri to set the record straight: the victim did not have any contact with the iron post that, according to some witnesses, he had used against Mancini. He had not brandished it, nor had he been struck by it. On the contrary, Amedeo Mancini’s fingerprints were evident on post used to hit the victim to death. The expert’s report confirms the autopsy report, according to which, before being killed by a fist to his face, the

ta-chiniary-1284841.html; “Fermo, l’ultima versione della vedova: ‘Mio marito menava con calci e pugni’”, *Libero*, July 16, 2016: [www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/italia/11930083/fermo---l-ultima-versione-della-vedova---mio-marito-menava-con-calci-e-pugni-.html](http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/italia/11930083/fermo---l-ultima-versione-della-vedova---mio-marito-menava-con-calci-e-pugni-.html); “Fermo, la vedova smentita dai verbali ha già ottenuto l’asilo”, *Il Giornale*, July 29, 2016: [www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-vedova-fermo-vedova-smentita-dai-verbali-ha-gi-1286505.html](http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-vedova-fermo-vedova-smentita-dai-verbali-ha-gi-1286505.html)

7 See “Il caso: mafia nigeriana al funerale di Emmanuel. Il legale: ‘Impossibile. Ogni nigeriano schedato dalla Prefettura’”, *La Provincia di Fermo*, November 27, 2016: [www.laprovinciadifermo.com/index.php/fermo2/cronaca-nera-fermo/3980-il-caso-mafia-nigeriana-al-funerale-di-emmanuel-il-legale-impossibile-ogni-nigeriano-schedato-dalla-prefettura](http://www.laprovinciadifermo.com/index.php/fermo2/cronaca-nera-fermo/3980-il-caso-mafia-nigeriana-al-funerale-di-emmanuel-il-legale-impossibile-ogni-nigeriano-schedato-dalla-prefettura); “Nigeriano ucciso, mafiosi al funerale. ‘Forse Emmanuel era uno di loro’”, *il Resto del Carlino*, November 28, 2016: [www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/fermo/cronaca/nigeriano-ucciso-funerali-mafiosi-emmanuel-1.2710882](http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/fermo/cronaca/nigeriano-ucciso-funerali-mafiosi-emmanuel-1.2710882); “Mafiosi nigeriani ai funerali con Boschi”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, November 27, 2016: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/premium/articoli/mafiosi-nigeriani-ai-funerali-con-boschi/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/premium/articoli/mafiosi-nigeriani-ai-funerali-con-boschi/)

8 See “L’interrogazione dei 5 Stelle a Fermo che difende Amedeo Mancini”, *NextQuotidiano*, September 27, 2016: [www.nextquotidiano.it/linterrogazione-dei-5-stelle-fermo-difende-amedeo-mancini/](http://www.nextquotidiano.it/linterrogazione-dei-5-stelle-fermo-difende-amedeo-mancini/)

Nigerian citizen had also suffered the breakage of a ligament of the left leg due to a kick from behind by his murderer all this was consistent with the repeated beatings suffered by man. Amedeo Mancini is under house arrest on charges of manslaughter, aggravated by racist motives.

“The expert’s report disproves the witnesses’ testimonies that favor the neo-fascist suspect. It the second slap in the face that in just a few days freezes the unusual media arrogance of the defenders of the murderer and the disturbing clutter of local social and political circles that since the day after the killing have tried to deny both the racist character of the episode and the full responsibility of the murderer”:<sup>9</sup> with these words Massimo Rossi, Municipal Councillor of L’altra Fermo/Fermo migliore and regional secretary Prc-Si Marche, describes the context, local and otherwise.

### The plea bargain

After that for months Mancini’s lawyers, together with a part of the local and national media, supported the thesis of legitimate defense, in January 2017 the man, accused of manslaughter, agreed to reduce sentence of 4 years before the Judge for the preliminary investigation of Fermo. The Gip, welcoming the agreement reached between the defense and the Public Prosecutor, sentenced Mancini to 4 years and granted him house arrest, with the possibility of going out for four hours a day – which will then become eight – to go to work.

The aggravating circumstance of the “abject and futile reasons” is considered inexistent, while the “racial” one is maintained, even if it has “little more than symbolic” concrete relevance,<sup>10</sup> as pointed out by Mancini’s defense lawyers, who explain that “even if it could lead to an increased sentence of up to five years, the agreed increase was only three months”. Mancini is also granted the attenuating effect of provocation, for which “it has been applied – the defending lawyers note – the reduction of the sentence to the maximum possible degree, equal to three years and five months”.

Emmanuel’s widow, Chinyere, renounces any action for damages against her husband’s killer, in exchange of payment of the only sum requested, 5,000 euros, for the repatriation to Nigeria of the body of her husband.

“After a lengthy media trial, so many claims on the existence of a discriminant

for legitimate defense, so many unfounded reconstructions, super witnesses who have told facts and circumstances that have now been denied, the only remaining truth is the one written in the sentence”, this is how Chinyere’s lawyer summarizes the story. “Everything, then, surpassed by this: even the 20 witnesses, who proved to be absolutely irrelevant to the thesis of legitimate defense, but certainly important to confirm the futility of the motives, sadly racist. Much ado about nothing, someone would say – concludes Astorri – since today there is a guilty person who professed himself innocent and an offended party, as she was always from the beginning, who came to Italy without anything and who certainly did not want to take advantage of the situation. Wanting only to let the body of her companion, murdered in that cursed July 5, 2016, rest in peace. With this ruling, therefore, it is only hoped that those who have made mistakes will learn to respect their neighbor, whoever they may be”.<sup>11</sup>

Ignored is the comment of the “5 Luglio” committee of Fermo,<sup>12</sup> formed after the tragic murder: “We believe that the plea bargain proposed by the defense of Mancini and accepted by the Public Prosecutor’s Office constitutes a clear admission of responsibility”. Thus the Committee, which highlights how “the thesis of legitimate defense’ or attempts to discredit the victim such as the theory that he belonged to the ‘Nigerian mafia’ have been revealed for what they were: attempts to hide the reality of the fact”. And the reality is that Emmanuel has died of racism.

The Committee also points out that “the plea bargain will lay a tombstone on the truth of the facts, but there will still be a lot of dangerous talk and unfounded and equally dangerous attempts to justify unacceptable behavior in a society that considers itself civilized and humane”. Even today, that the case is closed, some media continue to cast a shadow over the victims. “Fermo, Mancini agrees to a plea bargain of 4 years. And the widow “admits” her lies,” this is the headline of *Il Giornale* for example, distorting the meaning of the Justice ruling and the gesture of the widow.<sup>13</sup>

### The Release

In May 2017 Amedeo Mancini is released. The Magistrate for the Preliminary investigation of the Court of Fermo Maria Grazia Leopardi revokes the house

<sup>9</sup> The text dated Settembre 26, 2016, can be accessed at: [www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/?p=25251](http://www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/?p=25251)

<sup>10</sup> See “Migrante ucciso a Fermo, Mancini patteggia: 4 anni. La vedova di Emmanuel rinuncia a risarcimento”, *la Repubblica*, January 18, 2017: [www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/01/18/news/migrante\\_ucciso\\_a\\_fermo\\_mancini\\_patteggia\\_condanna\\_4\\_anni-156327339/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/01/18/news/migrante_ucciso_a_fermo_mancini_patteggia_condanna_4_anni-156327339/)

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> See the December 19, 2016, press release: “La motivazione razziale è il cuore della questione”, accessible at: [www.cgilfermo.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=491:20161219motivazionerazziale&catid=56:comunicatistampa](http://www.cgilfermo.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=491:20161219motivazionerazziale&catid=56:comunicatistampa)

<sup>13</sup> The January 18, 2017, article is available at: [www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-mancini-patteggia-4-anni-e-vedova-ammette-bugie-1353168.html](http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/fermo-mancini-patteggia-4-anni-e-vedova-ammette-bugie-1353168.html)



arrest taking into account the good conduct of the man both in prison and under house arrest. He is only subject to the obligation of daily signature with the Carabinieri.

“A man sentenced for murder, with racial aggravating circumstance, to four years imprisonment, after 10 months he is set free; Emmanuel Chidi Nnamdi is dead, yet his murderer is free”, this is the comment of the “5 Luglio” committee,<sup>14</sup> which continues: “We are not executioners, nor do we have any form of hatred towards the ‘culprit’ (though we strongly oppose his subculture); but we wonder what the value of that human life, crushed after being insulted, might be. We ask ourselves what kind of the message the young may glean from story; we are not worried about Mancini, but about the possible Mancinis of tomorrow. Finally, we wonder, how the whole incident would have developed (inside and, above all, outside the courtroom) if the dead had been white.

## The Palata case

*Annamaria Rivera*

Palata is a municipality of Basso Molise with 1,720 inhabitants, according to the most recent census. Its depopulation, caused by emigration and urbanization, is a noticeable fact: since 1951 it has lost more than two thousand inhabitants, a fact which many residents frequently complain about. And yet this town – very peripheral, in all senses – where the majority of families have been affected by emigration, even transoceanic, has been at the centre of an ugly history of rejection of *others*. As opposed to many other Molise municipalities, which have chosen the path of reception, in some cases also obtaining considerable advantages. Suffice it to mention the virtuous examples of Jelsi and Oratino, which have 1,781 and 1,641 inhabitants respectively, whose economy has flourished thanks to the integration of migrants and refugees into the social fabric.

The ugly story of Palata began on August 30, 2016, when the usual suspects set fire to a former day-care center, in an abandoned convent, then purchased by a private individual and destined to become the first reception centre for a small number of asylum seekers.<sup>1</sup> On October 10, twenty-four Nigerian and Ethiopian asylum seekers arrive: fourteen men, seven women and three small children. The management of the centre – we will learn later – will be entrusted to the Marinella Cooperative, part of the Matrix Consortium.

Once the fire is put out and the building declared safe in September, the Mayor, Michele Berchicci (candidate in a civic list), and the entire administration start expressing their hostility. They organize a meeting with the Prefecture and inform citizens about it with arguments such as “Here people are afraid”; citizens “especially in the afternoon and evening want to feel safe”,<sup>2</sup> as well as spreading, irresponsibly, rumors such as that, typical, about “migrants” as propagators of epidemics.

On the contrary to similar cases which has received more media attention, here

<sup>14</sup> See the text of the communiqué “Il duro commento del Comitato 5 Luglio e altre associazioni a riguardo del rilascio di Amedeo Mancini”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, May 16, 2017: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/duro-commento-del-comitato-5-luglio-associazioni-riguardo-del-rilascio-amedeo-mancini/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/duro-commento-del-comitato-5-luglio-associazioni-riguardo-del-rilascio-amedeo-mancini/)

<sup>1</sup> See “Spaccano la porta e appiccano il fuoco: incendio doloso nell’ex asilo destinato ai migranti”, *primonumero*, August 31, 2016: [www.primonumero.it/attualita/primopiano/articolo.php?id=22825](http://www.primonumero.it/attualita/primopiano/articolo.php?id=22825)

<sup>2</sup> See “Dopo l’incendio doloso l’ex asilo diventa un centro per migranti. Ma l’Amministrazione non ci sta”, *primonumero*, September 21, 2016: [www.primonumero.it/attualita/primopiano/articolo.php?id=22993](http://www.primonumero.it/attualita/primopiano/articolo.php?id=22993)

the Prefecture does not give in to intolerance. But in the meantime, a “Committee for the Security and Development of the Municipality of Palata”, promoted and chaired by Roberta Berchicci, is constituted by those strongly opposed to the arrival of refugees.

The Committee organizes protests and promotes a petition against the admittance of the asylum seekers, which will total as many as nine hundred signatures, corresponding to more than half of the population of Palato. Their Facebook page is soon filled with racist insults and comments exalting the extreme right; and still features the logo and slogan of Forza Nuova<sup>3</sup> “*Servi di nessuno, noi contro tutti*” (Servants of no one. We against all), posted by one of its most frequent visitors, Pasquale de Juliis: provincial coordinator of *Forza Nuova-Reggio Emilia* and originally from Palata.<sup>4</sup> The position taken by the Mayor and the municipal administration, as well as the birth of the Committee and its indulgence towards extreme right-wing positions, will help to pave way and give visibility to an organization distinguished by an “ideological vocation of the extreme National Socialist Right”, as defined by the judiciary that investigated a Roman case of racist and fascist action squads, particularly odious.<sup>5</sup> The neo-national-socialists are so audacious that in early November 2016, the aforesaid de Juliis announced on a Facebook page, created *ad hoc*, that “Forza Nuova will be present in Palata, with supporters, Roberto Fiore will participate at the opening of its headquarters, until we can stand (*sic*) as candidates for the next municipal elections”.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, to counter this drift the association Palata Antirazista e Solidale association is founded, which, among the many initiatives, on November 19,

3 Forza Nuova was founded by Roberto Fiore and Massimo Morsello, both sentenced by the Italian judiciary in 1985 for the crimes of subversive association and participation in armed groups. On the moral, as well as political, profile of the two read: G. M. Bellu, “Forza Nuova e i suoi ragazzi”, *la Repubblica*, December 23, 2000: [ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2000/12/23/forza-nuova-suoi-ragazzi.html](http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2000/12/23/forza-nuova-suoi-ragazzi.html)

4 Così è definito dall’“Ufficio stampa Forza Nuova Palata (CB)”: [ja-jp.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=805277122944229&id=438996762905602](https://ja-jp.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=805277122944229&id=438996762905602)

5 We refer to the so-called “Bangla tour”, punitive expeditions, with violent beatings, to the damages of defenceless Bangladesh citizens, carried out in large part by minors, as conceived as a sort of rite of initiation to the militancy in Forza Nuova: at least fifty raids in a single year, between 2012 and 2013. See: “Raid razzisti a Roma, ‘regia aggressioni in una sezione di Forza Nuova’”, *Il Messaggero*, January 14, 2016: [ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/raid\\_razzisti\\_roma\\_regia\\_aggressioni\\_sezione\\_forza\\_nuova-1482533.html](http://ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/raid_razzisti_roma_regia_aggressioni_sezione_forza_nuova-1482533.html); F. Angeli e G. Scarpa, “Pestaggi e raid squadristi, è il ‘Bangla tour’. ‘Così l’ultradestra va a caccia di immigrati’”, *la Repubblica*, November 22, 2013: [roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/11/22/news/pestaggi\\_e\\_raid\\_squadristi\\_il\\_bangla\\_tour\\_cos\\_l\\_ultradestra\\_va\\_a\\_caccia\\_di\\_immigrati-71577297/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/11/22/news/pestaggi_e_raid_squadristi_il_bangla_tour_cos_l_ultradestra_va_a_caccia_di_immigrati-71577297/)

6 See: [www.facebook.com/Forza-Nuova-Palata-CB-438996762905602/](https://www.facebook.com/Forza-Nuova-Palata-CB-438996762905602/)

2016, promotes, in collaboration with the *Osservatorio contro la repressione*, a conference on *Admittance and integration: resources and opportunities for growth for the local community*.<sup>7</sup> The meeting, considerably crowded, takes place in the hall of the City Council and, as well as being an opportunity for an interesting debate, is further proof of the infiltration of *Forza Nuova* in Palata.<sup>8</sup> In fact, a small group of its militants, in the hall from the beginning with arrogant and provocative attitudes, will succeed in transforming the conference into a brawl: by repeatedly interrupting one of the rapporteurs (the writer), finally unleashing such a verbal brawl to induce the group of asylum seekers present in the hall, accompanied by cultural mediators, to quickly abandon it.

Among them were two young women with their baby girls. Up until the commotion broke out, they were sitting in the front row, composed and attentive, all four dressed-up. It was a way of showing respect for their hosts: little did they know that such an act of civilization – once largely shared, across borders and continents, even more so in Palata – would be spoiled and overcome by the barbarity of local racists.

The image of the two mothers with their babies, all four at their best, could be a metaphorical antithesis of *the resentment communities*; often instigated by those who have taken on the despicable political mission to socialize the resentment, to transform it into racism. An antithesis, also, of their loss of memory, therefore of their inability to grasp the *self* in the *other*, reduced instead, to projection of their own ghosts, if not to pure shadow.

7 See “Accoglienza e integrazione: convegno a Palata”, *informamolise.com*, November 15, 2016: [www.informamolise.com/prima-pagina/accoglienza-e-integrazione-convegno-a-palata/](http://www.informamolise.com/prima-pagina/accoglienza-e-integrazione-convegno-a-palata/)

8 An excellent pretext for legitimising and re-launching the line of intolerance is offered to Forza Nuova and the Committee by an episode that takes place on February 28, 2017, when about ten young asylum seekers of Nigerian nationality will be protesting, rather unbridled (with the breaking of furnishings and the like), against the lengthy – in their opinion – process of obtaining international protection. Everything will quickly calm down after the intervention of a cultural mediator and the Carabinieri. In this regard, see: “I nigeriani vogliono i permessi: rivolta nel centro migranti, tavoli e sedie all’aria, 5 denunciati”, *primonumero*, February 28, 2017: [www.primonumero.it/attualita/primopiano/articolo.php?id=24300](http://www.primonumero.it/attualita/primopiano/articolo.php?id=24300)

## Gorino's barricades

Grazia Naletto

“Look this is what is left of my skin.” Deep scars: these are the ones she shows at the cameras in *Piazza Pulita*. She is one of the 12 women who never arrived in Gorino on October 24, 2016.<sup>1</sup> This is yet another act of violence which this time though is self-inflicted, in the hope perhaps, to induce a sense of humanity in a public divided by the barricades built on that dreadful day. Stick blows, hot water and salt on open wounds are the price she paid for refusing to become a prostitute, while she was in the hands of human traffickers in Libya. In Italy, she sought protection but, as soon as she arrived, together with her companions, the first thing she experienced was rejection.

To remember what happened in Gorino it is necessary to start from here, from the concreteness of the stories of the 12 women and 8 children who accompanied them, rejected by the residents (and by some interested outsiders) who literally barricaded the three access routes to the village, even *before knowing them*.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, there have been many forms of protest and social opposition against the reception of asylum seekers and refugees and we have analyzed them in some detail elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Yet, to go back and analyze the events in Gorino, allows us to address an issue we believe constitutes a mystification and that, even as we write, continues to steer the public debate and the government's choices in the wrong direction.

### The events

On October 24, 2016, at 12.55 a.m., the Prefect of Ferrara issued an order for partial seizure of the hostel-bar “Amore e natura” in Gorino with the aim of

1 See the October 27, 2016, broadcast at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXDqgShMQIc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXDqgShMQIc)

2 See S. Chiodo, “Prima le donne e i bambini... anzi no. Le barricate del rifiuto di Gorino”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, October 25, 2016: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/gorino-barricate-contro-profughi/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/gorino-barricate-contro-profughi/) and A. Rivera, “Le barricate caserecce di Gorino e gli imprenditori politici del razzismo”, *MicroMega-online*, October 31, 2016: [temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/le-barricate-caserecce-di-gorino-e-gli-imprenditori-politici-del-razzismo/](http://temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/le-barricate-caserecce-di-gorino-e-gli-imprenditori-politici-del-razzismo/)

3 See Lunaria (ed.), *Accoglienza. La propaganda e le proteste del rifiuto, le scelte politiche sbagliate*, Rome, March 2017: [www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/0FOCUS1\\_DEFINITIVO\\_13marzo.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/0FOCUS1_DEFINITIVO_13marzo.pdf)

assigning six rooms of the establishment to the reception of 12 women and 8 children from Ivory Coast, New Guinea and Nigeria. At 2.30 p.m. the Carabinieri arrived at the hostel and posted the notice. The measure had actually been anticipated a few days earlier by a telephone call from the Prefecture to the managers asking for information on the number of available rooms. On that occasion, the hostel managers had expressed their opposition to the partial use of the establishment as a refugee center.

At 3.30 p.m., a tom-tom on Facebook starts between the residents and soon after, the fishermen of some cooperatives block the road and transport to the access roads of the village some wooden pellets that they use for the storage of clams. Initially the blockade attracts about forty people, in the late evening there are two hundred, also because the residents receive the solidarity from the head of security of the Ferrara branch of the Northern League, known for having organized citizen watch patrols around Romani camps in the area; he contributes to the visibility to the protest with a direct Facebook.

The bus that is supposed to take the 20 people to Gorino is blocked in Comacchio for a few hours. *Negotiations* between the Carabinieri, the Prefect, the Mayor and residents last until late at night; at midnight the Prefect decides to cancel the transfer and temporarily accommodate women and children in three centers located in Comacchio, Fiscaglia and Ferrara.

The protesters have won.

### The “arguments” of the protesters

Gorino Ferrarese is a small and isolated hamlet of 641 inhabitants on the Po Delta, which is about 5 km from the Municipality of Goro (about 3,700 residents). The hostel-bar identified as a temporary solution by the Prefecture is owned by the Province and is also a place where the few residents of the hamlet can socialize. Gorino lives mainly thanks to the clams fishing, the effects of the crisis are felt and this aspect is part of the protesters' issues. “There is a crisis, people are committing suicide”; “we Italians find it difficult to live, 14 hours of work a day”, “there are Italians who struggle to find some work, are at home with no work, who sleep in their cars”.<sup>4</sup>

However, there are other “reasons” too. The lack of dialogue with the local population on the part of the Prefect is, for example, underlined by the hostel manager (who speaks of a preventive refusal already expressed by telephone a few days before the order of seizure).

4 These are some of the views voiced in *Piazza Pulita* (cf., footnote 1, above).

The fear that these first arrivals will be followed by others (rumors spread through the hamlet that the arriving refugees are 50 or 60), the fear of losing the only meeting place in the hamlet and the evocation of the security risks that would be caused by the arrival of asylum seekers (the local Carabinieri barracks were closed in 2012), inform the interviews with the participants to the protest published by the local and national press: "No one has told us anything. With an hour's notice they want to seize the hamlet's only meeting place. They have said that there are twenty women, but we do not know who they are. We have three roads in all, what should they do in Gorino, how do they spend time? By committing crimes, what else?"<sup>5</sup>

But from the barricades words of *pure rejection* are heard, which does not even diminish in front of the details provided by the Carabinieri: *these are just women*, one of whom is eight months pregnant, and children. What transpires is basically the existence of a closed and enclosed community in its own private universe, which is not willing to change the habits and rhythms of life proper to a small town where everyone knows and recognizes their neighbor, where one gets together in the bar-hostel to have breakfast or play cards and where strangers are not welcome. So, if there is a pregnant woman, "why does not the Prefect take her in, in his own home". "*We are not racists*, but here there is no place for everyone and we do not want problems".<sup>6</sup>

### They are not racists, but?

And here is the rub. As in similar cases, the racist rejection expressed in a spectacular form in Gorino, if not a legitimation, is at least met with a degree of *acceptance* (more or less clear and explicit) by some members of press operators and institutions. And it is precisely this disposition, which tends to turn all-too easily into *justification*, that represents one of the most troubling outcomes of this affair, beyond the damningly concrete effects on the lives of the 20 people involved. It is a very good example of the ethical and cultural shift that is reorienting the public debate on migration and asylum and the political choices of the government that affect the lives of thousands of people seeking protection in our country.

In articles and newspaper reports dedicated to Gorino, the description of the hamlet and the interviews its residents are often used to "prove" that the

barricades *have nothing to do with racism*. This is, for example, the conclusion of an article published by *La Stampa*: "What is feared is the invasion hence even 12 desperate homeless people become a threat. The real motive of this *jacquerie* is fear, not anger. 'Do not say that we are racists, it is not true', shout the citizens to the journalists. Hence, the ready-made indignation fades into perplexity. Gorino, this lost extremity of Italy (yes, this is Italy, Minister), becomes the symbol of an epochal problem that affects everyone. Without anyone really having the solution".<sup>7</sup>

In short, according to the author, it is not a question of racism, but of "fear" that lends to indignation a veil of perplexity, because Gorino is "the symbol of an epochal problem" that cannot be solved. It seems to escape the author and many of his colleagues that the discriminatory nature of a speech, act or behavior is completely independent of whether its authors are aware of it or not. You can be racist without knowing it and you can be racist even though you are not willing to recognize it publicly.

Yet the signs of a rooted hostility towards immigrants *tout court* (it doesn't matter whether they are so-called economic migrants or asylum seekers) in Gorino and environs are all there and they clearly surface not only in the words of the fishermen mentioned above, but much more directly in those of "Mrs. Elena", 76 years old introduced as one of the organizers of the protest.

Her words are explicit enough: "better be rude than to have monkeys". "Have you seen the faces of those landing? The expression of defiance they have on their faces? Their intellectual quotient is lower than that of whites," And about South Africa: "South Africa was a beautiful country when it was in the hands of whites". It later turns out that the lady was born in Eritrea at the time when the country was an Italian colony.

Moreover, the activism of the Northern League has also deeply eroded the solidarity culture of the "red" Emilia-Romagna. The movement's support for the protest was expressed at all levels: from the mere propaganda of the national secretary, "I am with Gorino", to the more concrete presence in the square of the secretary of the Ferrara branch, who did not hesitate to define the protesters as "the new heroes of the Resistance against the dictatorship of reception".

The interpretation that bundles together the effects of the crisis, popular

5 See R. Raimondo, "Gorino, voci dalle barricate: 'Qui già troppi problemi, e poi abbiamo paura'", *la Repubblica*, October 25, 2016: [bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/10/25/news/ferrara\\_profughi\\_respinti\\_a\\_gorino-150534920/](http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/10/25/news/ferrara_profughi_respinti_a_gorino-150534920/)

6 *Ibidem*.

7 See A. Mattioli, "Tra le barricate di Gorino, alla fine del Po: 'Non è razzismo, abbiamo paura'", *La Stampa*, October 26, 2016, [www.lastampa.it/2016/10/26/italia/cronache/tra-le-barricate-di-gorino-alla-fine-del-po-non-razzismo-abbiamo-paura-tYoV6YB7tFpFZuQgaGmYBN/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2016/10/26/italia/cronache/tra-le-barricate-di-gorino-alla-fine-del-po-non-razzismo-abbiamo-paura-tYoV6YB7tFpFZuQgaGmYBN/pagina.html)



dissatisfaction and anger, the representation of arrivals of asylum seekers as always and repeatedly as an emergency in order to deny the discriminatory, xenophobic and racist nature of events such as those that occurred in Gorino also directs institutional choices and discourses.

First of all, in Gorino the barricades of refusal won; institutions, specifically the Carabinieri and the Prefect of Ferrara, surrendered to the protesters for the sake of public order. "We couldn't bludgeon people".<sup>8</sup> And this is the first very concrete form of "understanding" of what happened, even if accompanied by a clear verbal distance: "My first thought goes to those women, I dare not think about what they felt, crossing the Mediterranean, going by coach to Bologna and then to Gorino and finally finding themselves in front of those barricades".<sup>9</sup>

Then there is the most intriguing understanding of the then President of the Council of Ministers: "Goro and Gorino is a difficult matter to judge, on the one hand there is part of the local population who is very tired and worried, but on the other hand we are talking about twelve women and eight children, probably from the state side, but also from the point of view of dialogue, the whole issue should have been addressed differently". This too, of course, is accompanied by a firm condemnation of what happened: "I want to be clear: the Italy that I know, when there are twelve women and eight children, would do everything in its power to solve the problem".<sup>10</sup>

A few months later, the concerns of the population will be evoked (this time with reference to what happened in Cona) by the Minister of Interior Minniti in order to argue the necessity and urgency of amending the legislation on asylum and combating irregular immigration and urban security, as well as the proposal to close Italian ports to the NGOs' ships that provide assistance at sea.<sup>11</sup> The specter

8 See "Gorino, il prefetto: 'Non potevamo certo manganellare i manifestanti'", *il Resto del Carlino*, October 25, 2016: [www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/ferrara/cronaca/gorino-profughi-prefetto-1.2624029](http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/ferrara/cronaca/gorino-profughi-prefetto-1.2624029)

9 *Ibidem*.

10 Words uttered by Matteo Renzi during the tv show *Porta a porta* on October 24, 2016, [www.raipaly.it/video/2016/10/Matteo-Renzi-Sui-migranti-pronti-a-bloccare-il-bilancio-Ue---Porta-a-porta-del-251016-0bb13b26-8689-4799-8e42-5f49ad3c9806.html](http://www.raipaly.it/video/2016/10/Matteo-Renzi-Sui-migranti-pronti-a-bloccare-il-bilancio-Ue---Porta-a-porta-del-251016-0bb13b26-8689-4799-8e42-5f49ad3c9806.html)

11 This passage from an interview given by the Minister is significant, it was published by the weekly *l'Espresso* on January 9, 2017: "For some time I have been having an idea: dispel the taboo that security policies are a right-wing issue 'par excellence'. It is true that a security impulse in society and public opinion often leads to a shift to the right of the electorate, but I have always believed that security is bread for the teeth of the left. Modern security policies are integrated: not only repression, as the right-wing thinks, not just social

of fear is stirred up to adopt policies that far from improving the reception conditions of asylum seekers and the level of security of Italian citizens, risk fueling the very rancor that they claimed to reduce.

The "understanding" attitude towards rejection can therefore have very slippery and dangerous results for all of us, born here or elsewhere. Annamaria Rivera has summarized what Gorino brought back to light:

In conclusion, if it is worth talking about the Gorino case (and the many similar cases scattered around the peninsula) it is because it is a clear illustration not of the popular, though unfounded, theorem of the "war among the poor", but rather a thesis that we have been advocating for a long time. To put it briefly, popular racism is basically socialized rancor; thanks to the work of political and media actively engaged in the racism business, dissatisfaction and resentment with one's living conditions, the sense of helplessness and frustration in the face of changes in society and the economic, social and identity crisis, are directed towards scapegoats.<sup>12</sup>

welfare interventions, as a part of the Left believed. And only a reformist left-wing political culture that does not simplify the answers can attempt to find an integrated solution to the security question.". The interview can be accessed at: [espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2017/01/05/news/marco-minniti-vi-racconto-il-mio-piano-sicurezza-che-da-oggi-e-una-parola-di-sinistra-1.292954](http://espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2017/01/05/news/marco-minniti-vi-racconto-il-mio-piano-sicurezza-che-da-oggi-e-una-parola-di-sinistra-1.292954)

12 See A. Rivera, "Le barricate caserecce di Gorino e gli imprenditori politici del razzismo", cit.

## Follonica: the cage of contempt

Anna Dotti

On February 23, 2017, in Follonica, three men imprisoned two women in a cage. The episode has come to the forefront of the national media (or rather, a small part of the national media)<sup>1</sup> thanks to a video that went viral on the web,<sup>2</sup> shot by one of the men while the other two were active protagonists. The Public Prosecutor's Office of Grosseto has opened criminal proceedings against the latter, charging them with kidnapping.<sup>3</sup>

The three men involved were employees of a supermarket in the German chain Lidl and, during a normal working day, they caught the two Roma women, inside the so-called "breakage area" of the supermarket, an area adjacent to the supermarket not open to the public and where it is therefore forbidden to enter.

There, in a metal cage in which the supermarket waste, mostly unsold goods to be disposed of, was collected, the two women were rummaging. The two men blocked the metal cage from the outside, made racist insults against the two women and witnessed, amused, their desperate cries.

Insults, laughter and screams were documented and broadcasted online, underestimating the consequences. According to Ramon Zurita – the only one of the suspects whose details are known – the video was shared by him with his colleagues in the supermarket, and was then published by someone else within various Facebook groups, thus, through social media, entering the public domain.<sup>4</sup>

So, not only is it considered *normal* to enclose two Roma women in a cage, to

frighten them, mock them and offend them, but to choose to *document* and *exhibit* this behaviour among friends. It is precisely this choice of self-representation that clearly exemplifies the cultural context in which the many forms of antigypsyism, xenophobia and racism proliferate.

The two women are Roma (one of the most stigmatised groups in our country) and are in a "private" place. The fact that they are rummaging in the scrapings of a supermarket (in search of food that no one else would otherwise use) is irrelevant: they are in a place where they should not be, "stealing". In fact, even stealing waste in a private place is "illegal".<sup>5</sup>

But the protagonists of this business do not stand on the side of "legality", denouncing the theft. They personally punish the two women by kidnapping them (even if only momentarily), terrifying, mocking and offending them, knowing that they are acting in a social and cultural context in which the legitimisation of these behaviours is widespread. Hence, the choice to shoot the scene (opening it with their own faces in the foreground) and broadcast it through WhatsApp. Once posted on Facebook by some addressee of the message, the video has in fact had thousands of views and a huge amount of racist comments of appreciation and online solidarity, many of which define the two attackers "heroes".

The exhibitionism of the aggressors is therefore rewarded with the approval of many: where the reality of the facts shows a brutal and violent act, some see a punitive act, to be emulated. This distortion of judgment is fundamentally based on the total lack of empathy towards the two women. These are poor and Roma, as such they are not worthy of a place in our society; even more so, they do not deserve to be respected as people; and they should not exist. This is the conclusion reached, for example, by some Tuscan customers of the supermarket, as documented by a video interview conducted by *Fanpage* the day after the event.<sup>6</sup> Without any hesitation, the people interviewed sided with the three attackers, whose behaviour is not only justified, but in a certain sense considered inadequate and weak. In some cases, there are real expressions of incitement to the physical annihilation of the women: "they should have set fire to them", "they should be put in the meat mincer".<sup>7</sup>

1 Some press agencies writes about aggression (Adnkronos e Ansa), *la Repubblica*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Il Giornale* (with a full-page piece which, for once, does not hesitate to condemn strongly what happened), *il manifesto* (with a short comment) e *Avvenire* (on a blog). The *Corriere della Sera* only on the pages of *Corriere Fiorentino*.

2 A copy of the clip is available here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW4fjvAAS6g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW4fjvAAS6g)

3 In accordance with Article 605 of the Penal Code. See: [www.diritto24.ilsolo24ore.com/guidaAlDiritto/codici/codicePenale/articolo/843/art-605-sequestro-di-persona.html](http://www.diritto24.ilsolo24ore.com/guidaAlDiritto/codici/codicePenale/articolo/843/art-605-sequestro-di-persona.html)

4 The text of the post published by Ramon Zurita through his Facebook account on April 29, 2017 reads: "the video was put by me in the chat of Whatsapp composed of ONLY 24 employees of Lidl Follonica and the video was not made public by Andrea [the other man that appears in the film, ed.] as said at the beginning, but by some other colleague(...) the video then, after circling on Whatsapp, was sent by private mail to various groups on Facebook with thousands of members trying to create the whole mess that happened". The full text is available here: [www.facebook.com/ramon.zurita.7/posts/10211363606039252?pnref=story](https://www.facebook.com/ramon.zurita.7/posts/10211363606039252?pnref=story)

5 In the specific case in question, the goods to be disposed of are still the property of Lidl to all intents and purposes, so that, if they are appropriated, they fall under the crime of theft, according to article 624 of the penal code. See: [www.laleggepertutti.it/codice-penale/art-624-codice-penale-furto](http://www.laleggepertutti.it/codice-penale/art-624-codice-penale-furto)

6 The interview is available here: [youmedia.fanpage.it/video/aa/WLCKMuSw0eIFVRsw](http://youmedia.fanpage.it/video/aa/WLCKMuSw0eIFVRsw)

7 It should be remembered that these comments had been preceded a few days before by an invitation to the "mass cleaning for migrants", expressed by Salvini during a

Still today, a few months after the event, numerous versions of the video can be found online, including various parodies, which show how the film has become, immediately after its publication, even a tool of “fun”: first of all with reference to the desperate screams of one of the two women. Zurita himself speaks of it as a joke<sup>8</sup>, favouring the trivialisation and normalization of racist behaviour and, in this way, the denial of its gravity also by many online commentators.

Lidl Italia immediately distanced itself from the behaviour of its employees<sup>9</sup> and after initially suspending the two men from work – those visible in the film, no data is known about the third who shot it – then definitively let them go: one of the suspects who was hired with a permanent contract was dismissed, while the other's contract was not renewed once it came to an end.<sup>10</sup>

The reactions of the world of politics were mostly absent and in any case inadequate. Andrea Benini, the Mayor of Follonica, initially expressed his indignation and then said he regretted the dismissal of the attackers.<sup>11</sup>

The leader of the Northern League, on the other hand, was extremely coherent and immediately supported the men by offering them legal support.<sup>12</sup>

Once the dismissal of the two was announced, on April 29, Matteo Salvini launched a boycott campaign through the social networks – already hypothesized in the form of a deterrent – against the German chain, with a clear message and an ad hoc hashtag: “Two boys, with a mortgage and family, fired, because they filmed two Roma thieves! vergogna! #boicottalidl!”.<sup>13</sup>

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campaign for the *Carroccio* membership. See “Pulizia di massa per i migranti. Anche con le maniere forti. Non possiamo tacere”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, February 22, 2017: [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/pulizia-massa-migranti-anche-le-maniere-forti-non-possiamo-tacere/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/pulizia-massa-migranti-anche-le-maniere-forti-non-possiamo-tacere/)

8 The text of the post is available here: [www.facebook.com/ramon.zurita.7/posts/10211363606039252?pnref=story](https://www.facebook.com/ramon.zurita.7/posts/10211363606039252?pnref=story)

9 See “Follonica, chiudono due rom in una gabbia e postano il video sui social”, *Adnkronos*, February 24, 2017: [www.adnkronos.com/fatti/cronaca/2017/02/24/follonica-chiudono-due-rom-una-gabbia-postano-video-sui-social\\_vfO8dNndku4AdDKotG3wOL.html?refresh\\_ce](http://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/cronaca/2017/02/24/follonica-chiudono-due-rom-una-gabbia-postano-video-sui-social_vfO8dNndku4AdDKotG3wOL.html?refresh_ce)

10 It is not yet clear whether the former employees will take legal action against the company's decision. See “Lidl ha allontanato i due dipendenti che chiusero le donne rom nella gabbia dei rifiuti”, *Il Post*, April 29, 2017: [www.ilpost.it/2017/04/29/lidl-licenziati-video-donne-rom/](http://www.ilpost.it/2017/04/29/lidl-licenziati-video-donne-rom/)

11 See “Rom chiuse in gabbia e filmate, licenziati due dipendenti della Lidl”, *La Nazione*, May 1, 2017: [www.lanazione.it/grosseto/cronaca/rom-rinchiuse-follonica-1.3073309](http://www.lanazione.it/grosseto/cronaca/rom-rinchiuse-follonica-1.3073309)

12 As can be read in a post shared on his Facebook account. See B. Farnetani, “Rom in gabbia, la solidarietà di Matteo Salvini ‘Sostegno legale ai due lavoratori. Ruspa’”, *Il Giunco*, February 24, 2017: [www.ilgiunco.net/2017/02/24/rom-in-gabbia-la-solidarieta-di-matteo-salvini-sostegno-legale-ai-due-lavoratori-ruspa/](http://www.ilgiunco.net/2017/02/24/rom-in-gabbia-la-solidarieta-di-matteo-salvini-sostegno-legale-ai-due-lavoratori-ruspa/)

13 See: [www.facebook.com/salviniofficial/photos/a.278194028154.141463.252306033154/10154727982898155/?type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/salviniofficial/photos/a.278194028154.141463.252306033154/10154727982898155/?type=3&theater)

The statements of the other political forces,<sup>14</sup> including the statements of the Italian left-wing leader Fratoianni<sup>15</sup> and Orlando, Minister of Justice,<sup>16</sup> were scarce and much less incisive. In fact, more a reaction to statements by the leader of the Northern League than a condemnation and a distance from what happened. As for the rest, the whole affair has been covered by silence: a guilty, worrying and harmful silence.

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14 See D. Petrini, “Rom in gabbia a Follonica, ma la politica (a parte Salvini) non ha niente da dire”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, February 25, 2017: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/02/25/rom-in-gabbia-a-follonica-ma-la-politica-a-parte-salvini-non-ha-niente-da-dire/3415950/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/02/25/rom-in-gabbia-a-follonica-ma-la-politica-a-parte-salvini-non-ha-niente-da-dire/3415950/)

15 See G. Ruccia, “Follonica, rom chiuse in gabbiotto. Fratoianni (Si) vs Salvini: ‘Fai schifo, sei un barbaro’”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, February 24, 2017: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/02/24/follonica-rom-chiuse-in-gabbiotto-fratoianni-si-vs-salvini-fai-schifo-sei-un-barbaro/3414629](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/02/24/follonica-rom-chiuse-in-gabbiotto-fratoianni-si-vs-salvini-fai-schifo-sei-un-barbaro/3414629)

16 See P. Barabino, “Pd, Orlando furioso coi suoi: ‘Salvini plaude per le rom in gabbia e noi zitti? Destra trionfa anche se vinciamo noi’”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, February 26, 2017: [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/02/26/pd-orlando-furioso-coi-suoi-salvini-plaude-per-le-rom-in-gabbia-e-noi-zitti-destra-trionfa-anche-se-vinciamo-noi/3417553/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/02/26/pd-orlando-furioso-coi-suoi-salvini-plaude-per-le-rom-in-gabbia-e-noi-zitti-destra-trionfa-anche-se-vinciamo-noi/3417553/)

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After almost three years, we are back to narrate the *Chronicles of ordinary racism* that inform Italian public and social life. The increasingly shameless racism that is currently spreading through web and which violently manifests itself in all four corners of Italy, is here analyzed thanks to contributions from Paola Andrisani, Sergio Bontempelli, Serena Chiodo, Anna Dotti, Giuseppe Faso, Grazia Naletto, Annamaria Rivera. The analysis is made possible by the daily work of monitoring, denunciation, reporting, education and awareness raising that Lunaria promotes through the [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org) website. The contributors to this publication have drawn from the one thousand and four hundred and eighty-three cases of racist discrimination and violence documented in our on-line database and from the published articles and discussions that have characterized the public debate on racism in Italy between January 1, 2015, and May 31, 2017.



**Lunaria** is an Italian not-profit Association for Social Promotion. It was created in 1992, and since then it is a non governmental body, autonomous from religious and political affiliations. Lunaria promotes peace, economic and social justice, equality and citizenship rights, democracy and grass-root participation, social inclusion and intercultural dialogue through advocacy, political-cultural initiatives, communication, non-formal education, training and research. Since 1996 Lunaria has been carrying out research activities, information and campaigns on migration and against racism. The main objectives of its campaigns include full guarantee of citizenship rights and asylum, reform of the law on citizenship, closure of Identification and Expulsion Centers (today Permanent Residence Centres for Repatriation). Since 2000 Lunaria promotes, in collaboration with 48 civil society organizations, the **Sbilanciamoci!** campaign.

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