

XENOPHOBIA, RADICAL NATIONALISM, AND EXPRESSIONS OF HATRED IN ITALY

INTRODUCTION

One of the most relevant aspects to be considered is the latest updates (November 2020) in the legislation affecting minorities rights in the two-year period under review (2018-2020). This was due to changes in the government and in the overall political and social volatile climate affecting the population. In the present report, we are going to examine and analyse in which way those changes have been positive or negative for the ethnic, religious and other minorities living in Italy between 2018-2020. This main event in matter of legislative changes has been the review and amendment of the legislation on migration issued in 2018 known as *decreti di sicurezza e immigrazione* (decree for the security and immigration) or most commonly called the ‘Salvini-Law’ and ‘Salvini-bis’ from the name of the interior minister of the time, Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right party Lega. In 2020, as will be better explained in the relative sub-section of the present report, the new Conte-government has felt the need to review and make a few amendments to the previous legislation on the matter. These changes were welcomed as a signal of openness by the Italian authorities on the problem of migration, but also criticised by several organizations for human rights and NGOs as we will see later on.

In matter of protection of minorities and on the modalities by which the Italian authorities are attempting to protect and improve the rights of minorities living in the country, the situation remain unaltered since January 2020, when it has been reached an agreement between the Italian government (in the person of the interior minister Luciana Lamorgese) and the Islamic assembly to better protect and defend the Muslim citizens living in Italy especially against cases of Islamophobia occurred in the country in the last years, and also to establish a collaboration to prevent forms of radicalization and terrorist activities by groups of Islamist who can be active on the territory (see the relevant section of this report for a detailed analysis of the topic).¹

¹ <https://www.ismu.org/le-associazioni-islamiche-in-intalia/>.

In theory, there is an extensive legislation already in place that should protect minorities from any form of discriminatory act, but in matter of fact, in the recent years the influence of political characters like Matteo Salvini (Lega) and Giorgia Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia) have created an overall hostile environment for migrants, foreigners and minorities groups. There has been an increase of hate crime especially inspired by well-known far-right organizations like Casa Pound or Forza Nuova, but also by the recent phenomenon of the so-called 'religious right' (traditional Catholics) who have endorsed anti-immigration, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and overall, xenophobic approach, and by starting 'crusades' on social issues currently affecting the country like for instance, the recent law against the homophobia approved by the Italian Parliament.² In this, is evident the influence of the notorious American far-right intellectual Steve Bannon, who is building in the 12th century Benedictine abbey of Trisulti, near the city of Frosinone (not far from Rome), a university campus for ultra-nationalists and alt-right future intellectuals and politicians.³ The incidents related to hate crime have now slowed down due to the Covid-19, although in the first phase of the pandemic, many were the incidents reported against immigrants, especially of Chinese heritage.⁴

The most relevant element in our research for this report has been the detection of hate crime online through the use of social media and social platform, with a worrying increase of xenophobic and far-right groups proliferating on internet mixing together xenophobia and no-vax instances, where it has been noticed an evident suspicion towards immigrants in general, with specially peaks of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism episodes occurring online more than on the ground as detected by a conjunct police operation led by Germany in nine European countries (including Italy) and organised by the Europol counter terrorism centre in November 2020.⁵ The presence of a Muslim community in the country has in time augmented the feelings of fear and distrust in the local population toward the Muslim minorities, and highlighted the problematic settlement and assimilation to the natives. Those feelings are also the consequence of terrorist activity outside the country by radical Islamist organizations like the ISIS⁶, but as well as because the volatile and hostile climate that specific political groups and parties like

² <https://www.globalist.it/news/2020/10/15/la-destra-ultra-tradizionalista-scende-di-nuovo-in-piazza-per-difendere-il-loro-diritto-ad-essere-omofoba-2066212.html>.

³ https://www.roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/05/27/news/il_tar_accoglie_il_ricorso_la_certosa_di_trisulti_rest_a_ai_sovranisti-257693791/.

⁴ https://www.ilquartz.wiki/wiki/List_of_incidents_of_xenophobia_and_racism_related_to_the_COVID-19_pandemic; <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/04/16/coronavirus-e-colpa-della-cina-scrivono-certificati-cardinali-ma-ce-il-rischio-di-incidente-diplomatico/5771736/>.

⁵ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/stopping-hate-speech-online-europol-coordinates-first-europe-wide-action-day>.

⁶ <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/tackling-italys-foreign-fighters-24763>.

Lega, Fratelli d'Italia or CasaPound and Forza Nuova have managed to spread in the population due to an efficient use of political and ideological propaganda.⁷

In the present report, we will also analyse the presence of Islamic groups and organizations on the territory, and we will attempt to assess whether in Italy there might be a threat of terroristic nature.

1. CHANGES POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IN LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE INTEREST OF MINORITIES IN THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

• DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION AFFECTING MINORITIES

The only act of discriminatory legislation is probably due to the acquisition of Italian citizenship for all those second or third generation Italians born out of foreign or immigrants parents. Paradoxically, the new migration law, considers their parents (if they have agreed to regularize their civil status), legally in the country, but not so their children until they do not reach the 18th year of age, when they can finally apply to obtain the Italian passport as pointed out by the association *Italiani Senza Cittadinanza* (Italians without passport).⁸ This association is in matter of fact, formed by those Italians born out of foreign parents who cannot have direct access to obtain the Italian passport by birth right, and that have criticised the recent changes in the migration law (see the relevant sub-section) noticing how now it will take longer than before (three years rather than two years) to obtain the passport. But what is the main issue here is the discussion of the *just soli* against the *jus sanguinis*. The legislation set up in 1992, established that those who could apply to the Italian citizenship must have at least one of the two parents holding a legal Italian citizenship, or, if not this is the case, they must have a relative (like for instance, grandparents) that does so, and this is what is meant by *jus sanguinis* (right to the citizenship by blood). Due to the recent years' migratory waves, we had in time more and more persons born in Italy from foreign parents who are not automatically counted as 'Italian' (this would be the *jus soli*- the right of birth that is currently used in the US). The result of such legislation is that we have currently circa 600.000 minors who were born in Italy but must wait until they turn 18 years old to apply for obtaining the Italian passport.⁹ Although,

⁷ <https://www.it.sputniknews.com/mondo/202006006209220785-lega-e-fratelli-ditalia-si-oppongono-a-risoluzione-ue-contro-il-razzismo/>; Barbara Ciolli 'Nel Naufragio del Titanic, I Sovranisti Salvini e Meloni Continuano a Suonare il Violino' <https://www.thevision.com/politica/internazionale-sovranita-sconfitta/>.

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/italianisenzacittadinanza/>; <https://www.partito.immigrati.it>.

⁹ <https://www.ilbolive.unipad.it/it/news/dossier-statistico-immigrazione-italia-stranieri>.

the legislation and the following reforms made (the last in order of time, in October 2020), there are people who are still waiting for a response from the Italian authority whether or not their application was successful.¹⁰ The delay by the state bureaucracy to comply with the hundreds of applications for the Italian citizenship for those who were born in Italy but not from Italian parents, is maybe one of the worst discriminations that can be detected in a society already discriminatory towards ethnic minorities and that has not been able, although the recent amendments made to the current migration law, to solve the eternal conundrum of a different and diverse generation of ‘Italians for the third millennium’.

- **IMPROVEMENT OF ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION**

In Italy, when discussing the anti-discriminatory legislation, there are several categories that we need to include. Starting with the linguistic and ethnic minorities, we can say that there are already present several historic linguistic and ethnic minorities living on the territory. Those are the long-term well-established minorities of French, German, Slovenian (mainly in the north of the country) communities, and the Arberëshe (Albanian), Greek minorities (living predominantly in the south). The most recent linguistic and ethnic minorities are the Muslim community, result of the migratory waves of the last forty years predominantly from the Maghreb region of north Africa, together with African sub-Saharan migration, and the Asian migration (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China) in the last thirty years.¹¹ The improvement we can see in matter of anti-discriminatory legislation is related to the right to citizenship with the recent reform of the 2018 ‘Salvini-law’ and ‘Salvini-bis’ approved in October 2020, that reduces the period between the application for the Italian citizenship to the actual obtaining it, to three years, while previously it was between 24 and 48 months, although as already mentioned above, there have been some critics because overall all the time of application is three years in matter of fact.¹² The latest reform of the acquisition of the Italian citizenship confirms what it had been established in the previous legislation, i.e., the withdrawal of the citizenship only in case of terrorism or in case of court sentence within the Italian criminal law and it is *de facto* a further amendment to the previous legislation on this matter.¹³ The criteria for being eligible to apply for the Italian citizenship are now the following:

¹⁰ https://www.agora.hostwriter.org/article/andrea-milluzzi_blood-and-soil-the-right-to-be-italian.

¹¹ <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/fact-checking-migrazioni-e-covid-19-27058?gclid=Cj0KCQiAfz=BRDjARYcAEELYGL4vIRQrur6c46giP2TznVcKR7beRTwIIWdS..>

¹² <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/temi/cittadinanza-e-altri-diritti-civili/minoranze>.

¹³ Gazzetta Ufficiale, No. 281, 3rd December 2018.

- By birth right (it is possible to apply once the person reaching 18 years of age)
- By adoption
- By marriage
- By residency
- By special merits

The first point is quite controversial as already illustrated in the previous sub-section of the present report, and sees still quite a strong civil right social campaigning in order to change it. The right to citizenship is still a controversial point in the political debate with parties like the Lega and Fratelli d'Italia strongly opposed to the idea of facilitating the regularization the position of immigrants and other foreign and ethnic minorities. This makes complicated and oftentimes difficult for the more liberal political forces to succeed in a complete renewal and revision of the legislation on this matter. In the last decade, there has been a progressive worsening of the perception of the foreign or migrant in the collective imagination of the Italian populace, which has implied also the popularity and political success of the far-right parties and movements, and an increase of intolerance and prejudice against the minorities living in Italy. In such climate, any change or amendment made to the previous legislation in matter of migration and minorities rights has progressed slowly and by small steps in order to avoid a popular uprising on this issue. Another minority often discriminated is the LGBT community whose representatives have been attempting to lobby the authorities and the public opinion for have recognised their rights and dignity. The LGBT community still is awaiting from the Italian authorities the completion of the so-called 'Legge Cirinná' of 2016 which, in matter of fact, regulates homosexual couples. In reality, Italy is the 35th over 49 European countries where LGBT's rights are barely acknowledged. And while in 16 European countries both marriage and civil union enjoy the same rights, in Italy, the two civil rights are not necessary overlapping.¹⁴ This indicates still a high level of civil discrimination for the LGBT minority that barely can enjoy the same rights of hetero-sexual couples in the same situation. In matter of gender equality and LGBT's rights Italy has still hard work to do.

- **MIGRATION LEGISLATION**

¹⁴ <https://www.orizzontipolitici.it/fra-discriminazioni-e-nuovi-diritti-gli-lgbt-in-italia/>.

While the period 2018-2020 has not seen substantial changes on minorities already legally living in the country, it has undoubtedly seen several changes in matter of legislation particularly on migration. In the year 2018, Matteo Salvini (Lega) as Interior minister, drafted a migration bill on ‘security and immigration’ that *de facto* heavily penalised migrants and foreigners living in Italy. The same ‘Legge-Salvini’ (Salvini-Law), underwent further modifications later in the same year 2018, introducing a further rigour in matter of migration to Italy. Changes in the government (Salvini resigned from his position in August 2019), brought the ‘Salvini Law’ under examination of a parliamentary commission under the supervision of the new Interior minister, Luciana Lamorgese. On 5th and 6th October 2020, a new legislation in matter of migration has been introduced, the so called NADEF¹⁵ making substantial amendments to the ‘Salvini laws’, although some of the previous legislation has been maintained as observed by some critics. The current government approved a law-decree following the prime minister Giuseppe Conte’s and the newly appointed Luciana Lamorgese’s proposal to make some changes to the previous legislation. But what has actually changed? The most substantial changes concern two aspects of the previous regulations in matter of migration. The first aspect is the one concerning international protection; the second instead, the rescue at the sea. Regarding the first point, the new decree introduces the norm which states it is forbidden to expel or reject anyone whose deportation back to the provenience port, could cause for them high risk of undergoing inhumane and degrading treatment, or violation of his family and individual’s life. This is an important step forward considering that the previous Salvini-Law and the following Salvini-bis, would contemplate the expulsion and deportation from the country only if there was a proven risk of torture for the subject. But another important change in positive is the conversion of visas, namely, that legal procedure according to the which the foreign citizens legally living in Italy, can apply for a different type of visa from the original one they once applied when arrived in the country. On this point, the new immigration law contemplates that could be converted in working visa all those visas previously agreed for religious reasons, special protection, for the acquisition of the citizenship, for sport activities or artistic, or for assisting under-age subjects.

It has been created a new system of Welcoming and Integration, which should be organized on two levels: 1) the first level for those seeking international patronage; 2) the second level dedicated to those who already are legal visa holders but with further integration services. In

¹⁵ NADEF is an acronym to indicate the following: ‘NOTA DI AGGIORNAMENTO DEL DOCUMENTO DI ECONOMIA E FINANZA’ (my transl.: Upgrading Note of the economy and finance document).

matter of fact, as it has been observed, we have again centres now called SIPROIMI ex SPRAR.¹⁶ This time, however, the SIPROIMI¹⁷ have become *de facto* new structures known as SISTEMA DI ACCOGLIENZA E INTEGRAZIONE (System of Welcoming and Integration). The last point stressed in the new decree on immigration deals with the methods of punishment for those who illegally smuggle immigrants and asylum seekers into the country. According to the previous ‘Salvini-Law’ and ‘Salvini-Bis’, those responsible for human trafficking were heavily fined and legally sanctioned; the new decree, introduce for such activity, fines between 10.000 and 50.000 euro and 2 years imprisonment making it *de facto* a crime. This change affects negatively above all the NGOs which have been rescuing at sea many immigrants escaping from Africa, because being rescued by Italian vessels, not always happens.

The data of 2020 IDOS report tell us that in Italy have entered almost 70000 migrants against people already present in the state immigration centres which were in the number of 84.445 in June 2019. However, it must be pointed out that although we have lesser arrivals of immigrants, it has augmented the number of irregular or illegal immigrants in the territory. According to these official data on immigration issued by the Italian authorities,¹⁸ at the end of the year 2018 the number of illegal immigrants in Italy was of 562.000 unities, in the following two years (2019-2020), also because of the Salvini-law, the number of irregular immigrants had grown of 120.000-140.000 unities, reaching the number of 610.000 at the end of 2019. The IDOS report above cited also report that by the end of 2020 (June) the irregular or illegal immigrants can be reaching the number of 700.000. The report also adds that it has been an amnesty for 220.500 foreign workers in the summer of 2020 in order to legalize the presence of immigrants on Italian territory, the majority of which were in the domestic work sector. However, only a small number involved in the black work-market of the agricultural sector has actually came forward to be legalized.¹⁹

The chart below shows how the number arriving in Italy has decreased noticeably in the last two years (2018-2020). The reasons can be multiple as increased control on the Italian border of the Mediterranean Sea by the Italian authorities and by the application of the ‘Salvini-Law’ and the ‘Salvini-bis’, which in several occasions, denied access to NGOs vessels with migrants

¹⁶ SPRAR is an acronym indicating the following: SERVIZI per la PROTEZIONE dei RICHIEDENTI ASILO e dei RIFUGIATI (my transl.: Services for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees).

¹⁷ SIPROIMI is an acronym indicating the following: System of International Protection and for Un-Accompanied Minors.

¹⁸ DOSSIER STATISTICO IMMIGRAZIONE E CENTRO STUDI E RICERCHE IDOS 2020.

¹⁹ <https://www.intersos.org/dossier-statistico-immigrazione-2020-contributo-intersos/>.

on board. One case in particular, the ‘Gregoretti case’ has seen the previous Italian interior minister, Matteo Salvini, in court recently for breaching of international law and violation of human rights. He has been found guilty on both accounts.²⁰

NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS ARRIVED IN ITALY (2018-2019)

YEAR	Immigration Centres	Arrivals	Total
2018	120.000	23.370	135.858
2019	80.000-100.000	11.471	91.424
2020 (June)	50.000-80.000	6.812	84.445

NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS RESIDENT REGULARLY IN ITALY 2018-2020

Romania	1.207.919
Albania	440.854
Morocco	432.458
China	305.089
Ukraine	240.428
Philippines	169.137
India	161.101
Bangladesh	147.872
Egypt	136.113
Pakistan	127.101

• LEGISLATION AIMED AT COMBATING HATE CRIMES

Unfortunately, in Italy the jurisprudence does not contemplate a specific and *ad hoc* legislation aimed at combating hate crimes. In general, the police forces called to solve hate crimes, use the definition of ‘hate crime’ of bodies like the OIHIDIR and the OSCE. The only piece of legislation that can be considered aimed at combating hate crime is the ‘Legge Mancino’ (Mancino Law) and it is specific for apology of fascism, which in Italy is a crime. With these premises, it is difficult for the Italian authorities intervene with measures of law enforcement, and often, they can intervene only if the ‘hate crime’ component is additional to an action that instead is considered crime by the Italian law (for instance, to physically assault somebody). In addition, it must be said that in many occasions, hate crimes episodes are under-reported

²⁰ Annalisa Camilli ‘Tutto Quello che C’è’ Da Sapere sul Caso Gregoretti’
<https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2020/02/12/salvini-gregoretti-da-sapere>.

and thus, the Italian police cannot either intervene or report the crime in question.²¹ Different is the case for the hate speech instead. Here the Italian legislation seems to be more structured. Following the Recommendation (97)20 of the European Council of Ministers, with the expression ‘hate speech’ is intended any form that would incite racial hate, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of hate based on aggressive nationalism. However, the legal tool used by the Italian authorities to contrast the hate speech crime is the article 604 bis (ex artic. 31.654/75) which punishes hate speech as ‘propaganda and the instigation to crime on account of racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination’.²²

2. LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES AFFECTING MINORITIES. EXAMPLES FROM THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

In theory, the application or enforcement of the law should not be discriminating the minorities, as the legislative institutions, and the police forces are clear that all citizens are equal before the law. However, there have been situations and cases where the law enforcement has created discrimination especially when directed to representatives of minorities. After the killing of George Floyd in the US, and that has triggered the civil rights movement *Black Lives Matter*, there have been questions on whether also the Italian law enforcement could somehow affect minorities. On this issue, Rachel Nield, representative of the NGO *Open Society Justice Initiative* has declared that ‘it is impossible to quantify the number of people discriminates or brutalised by the police forces, because we do not have a consistent recording of such abuses, or of the ethnicity of the victims.’²³ From the latest data, only Great Britain does record possible racial abuses within its files and ranks. Therefore, it is often difficult to provide data or examples because either the abuse is not recorded officially by the police forces, and because most of the time, the victims do not report it. However, when looking at the law enforcement practices affecting minorities, maybe the most common practice is the police profiling that affects always negatively representatives of ethnic minorities especially.

According to the report ‘Being Black in the EU, large numbers of people of African descent who are stopped by the police say they experience racial profiling, an unlawful practice that undermines their trust in law enforcement authorities. One quarter (24 %) of all persons of African descent surveyed were stopped by the police in the five years before the survey. Among these, four in 10 characterised the most recent stop as racial profiling (41 %). Another one in

²¹ <https://www.poliziamoderna.poliziadistato.it/articolo/3535e186033b0f9d263164252>.

²² Ibid. <https://www.poliziamoderna.poliziadistato.it/articolo/3535e186033b0f9d263164252>.

²³ <https://www.it.euronews.com/2020/06/04/anche-le-polizie-europee-hanno-un-problema-di-profilazione-razziale-discriminazione>.

10 respondents (11 %) were stopped by the police in the 12 months before the survey, with four in 10 among them characterising the last stop as racial profiling (44 %). Men are three times more likely to be stopped (22 %) than women (7 %), and they are more likely to consider the most recent stop as racial profiling (44 %) compared to women (34 %). Overall, respondents rate their trust in the police at 6.3 on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘no trust at all’ and 10 indicates ‘complete trust’. The lowest average level of trust in the police is found among respondents who consider the most recent police stop they experienced as racial profiling (4.8). Profiling involves categorising individuals according to personal characteristics, which can include racial or ethnic origin, skin colour, religion or nationality. For more on profiling, see FRA’s guide on Preventing unlawful profiling today and in the future (to be published in December 2018). The practice is commonly and legitimately used by the police to prevent, investigate and prosecute criminal offences. However, racial profiling is discriminatory and unlawful. Such profiling is defined as the ‘use by police, with no objective and reasonable justification, of grounds such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin in control, surveillance or investigation activities’, as outlined in General Policy Recommendation N°11 of the Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance.²⁴

- **DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICE**

As pointed out in the previous sub-section, it seems that the police profiling is one of the most widespread discriminatory practice when looking at the Italian police forces’ action on the territory. The Italian UNAR (Union Nazionale Anti- Razzismo)²⁵ has been recording for the last ten years possible discriminatory practice often within European projects on this issue. It seems that the social and ethnical category more often object of discriminatory practice is the Roma and Sinti communities.²⁶ We do not possess specific cases or data to quantify the discriminatory practice occurring at the expenses of minorities because as already stressed in several occasions in this report, often such situations go under-reported or not recorded by the official institutions. It is more of a task left to the several NGOs, that often have different data at disposal. On this point for instance, if we take the recording of discriminatory acts done by the NGO ‘Lunaria’, we see that in Italy between 2008 and 2020 there have been recorded circa

²⁴ https://www.fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-being-black-in-the-eu_eu/pdf.

²⁵ Translation in English: ‘National Anti-Racism Union’.

²⁶ https://www.gitanos.org/upload/25/30/14-09-22_Guia_Servicios_Policiales_ITALIANO_WEB.pdf.

7.426 cases of racial discrimination. In regard of law enforcement, most of the cases of discrimination occurred in 2018, when Salvini was minister of the interior. In that year notorious has been the evacuation of a centre in Caserta (Campania region) that left homeless circa 200 immigrants. This was the consequence of an anti-immigration law 132/2018.²⁷

Overall, we can conclude that discriminatory acts are still occurring although they are not always recorded by the official institutions, and their collection is often due to the private initiative of human/civil rights organizations that often supply the lack of information that is evident in the official institutions. However, it must be said that the new government in place has started a consistent campaign in order to curb and eventually eliminate any form of discrimination against minorities.

- **ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES**

Italy has participated between the 2019 and 2020, in the several initiatives proposed by international bodies like for instance the European Union, but it has also promoted anti-discriminatory practice and sensitive campaigning against diversity at a national level especially after the ‘Willy Monteiro Duarte case’ which shocked the public opinion. The case above mentioned is the case of murder for racial motives of a young man (21 years old) of Dominican origins grew up in Colleferro (a small town in the Lazio region). Willy was beaten up to death by four Italians expert in martial arts in September 2020.²⁸ The event that shocked the public opinion was the futile motivation behind such violence, and the fact that the four Italians published online comments of clear racial hatred soon after, to comment the event. The killing in September of this young man, and the change in the government, have produced a shift at institutional level, and the Italian authorities seems now keener on participate in anti-discriminatory campaigns in matter of legislation, as well as addressing the public opinion’s sensitivity on this matter. Among the anti-discriminatory practices undertaken by the current government, there is the possibility also for the immigrants living in the country legally to have access to the so called ‘reddito di cittadinanza’ (citizenship income), a monthly benefit that Italians un-employed or with a low income have right to. This is a big step forward in matter of equality between the different social and ethnic groups living in the country. It seems that at the institutional level, the situation is improving in the last year (2019-2020).

²⁷ <https://www.Lunaria.org/il-razzismo-nel-2018-online-il-nostro-nuovo-focus>.

²⁸ https://www.roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/09/08/news_ragazzo_ucciso_a_colleferro_si_valuta_l_aggravant_e_razziale-266573802.

- **FIGHTING HATE CRIME**

In fighting the hate crime, the Italian institutions are joining the initiatives that have been taken in this sense by international organizations as for instance the initiative taken by the European Union.²⁹ This is five years plan (2020-2025) that, as it can be read in the report issued, is addressing specifically the problem of hate crime in Europe, and Italy being a European member state, has committed to join the plan to fight effectively the widespread racial prejudice so common in Italy in the last decade. Other initiatives to fight hate crime have been taken by NGOs like LUNARIA since 1996 engaged in denouncing cases of hate crime in Italy, and involved in promoting tolerance and inclusiveness on the territory.³⁰ But, a special mention in fighting hate crime should be for the Vatican. During the current pontificate of Pope Francis, I, the religious institution has been soon vocal on the problem of racism, discrimination, and hate crime in the country often in open confrontation with far-right parties and movements. The Pope seems indeed often the sole public figure that openly take the position of fighting the hate crime.³¹ The sensitivity campaign against hate crime has been quite central in the period under examination, and especially after the case of the young Dominican assassinated in September 2020 (as mentioned in the previous sub-section), other public figures like the Senator Liliana Segre, Holocaust survivor, has championed with several public initiatives and interviews, the fight against the hate crime receiving repeated death threats by far-right groups and sympathizers.³² It must be said, however, that also the school system is promoting the fight of hate crime and inclusiveness now that many more Italian pupils and secondary school students are of different or mixed cultural and ethnic background.

Overall, there are some initiatives that seem to go in the right direction in changing public opinion's feelings towards minorities. But this is just the beginning, the process of inclusion and tolerance has just started, however, as better explained in the following sub-section, the hate crime cases seem to have augmented in the period 2018-2020, compared to the previous years.

²⁹https://www.ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_2025_it.pdf.

³⁰ <https://www.lunaria.org/immigrazioni-e-antirazzismo/>.

³¹ <https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2019/11/15/papa-francesco-a-penalisti-no-a-cultura-dello-scarto-e-dell-odio-vigilare-ricompagno-emblemi-del-nazismo>.

³² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/world-europe-50329597>.

- **PREVENTIVE MEASURES AGAINST THE SPREAD OF EXTREMISTS VIEWS IN CERTAIN SOCIAL GROUPS AGAINST THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM AND RADICAL GROUPS. ETC.**

Italian authorities tend to maintain control over the spread of extremist views, and for on this specific issue, in Italy there is a specific police department, the DIGOS (political police) that has been active in this sense since the 1970s because of the political terrorism that the country endured between 1970s and 1980s. The preventive measures taken in order to avoid the spread of radicalism or the financing extremist groups are those contemplated by the anti-mafia measures adopted in an update of the legislation on this matter occurred in 2015. On this occasion, more legislative powers have been given to the anti-mafia attorney general that has become also responsible for the monitoring of possible terrorist activities on the territory. As consequence, the intelligence and the special anti-mafia police departments have been potentiated in order to face a possible insurgence of radical groups and terrorism. As already explained in the relevant sub-sections of the present report, the presence of Islamic radicalism is relatively low. However, the legislation updated in 2015 and now in place for the monitoring, control, and preventing activities of the police departments and intelligence on the territory seem to enough to prevent the spreading of extremism and terrorism activities on the territory.³³

- **CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS**

It has been stressed in many occasions in this report that in Italy the emergency of jihadism seems to be less relevant than in other European countries like for instance, France or Great Britain. However, in the period under investigation (2018-2020), there have been some cases of Islamic radicalism in Italy as well. The Italian political police department have investigated cases of proselytism and spreading of violence ideology with terroristic ends, looking specially at certain areas in the north of country, where the concentration of Muslim population is higher. In several cases we are looking at Italian converted to Islam, and enrolled into fringes of the ISIS to be foreign fighters in Syria, or Muslim largely coming from the Maghreb region. In the next sub-section, we will look at the convictions given by the Italian authorities for these specific cases of Islamic radicalism and terrorism on Italian soil. On this aspect, however, it should also be mentioned the neo-Nazi radicalism and terrorism with some episodes that the Italian police have ascribed to terrorism charges. The peculiarity of this type of far-right terrorism is that there is a strong absence on the territory, and a strong presence on internet.

³³ <https://www.archiviudoc.dirittopenaleuomo.org/d/3851=approvata-definitivamente-dal-senato-la-legge-di-conversione-del-decreto-legge-antiterrorismo>.

Many are the groups that also in Italy, as well as worldwide, have joined the white supremacists and preach a ‘theory of the race’ or plan terrorist attacks against the Italian Jewish and Muslim minorities. In most of those cases, the neo-Nazi terrorists use the ‘lone wolf’ tactics that is also used in the Islamic radicalism. On 3 February 2018, Luca Traini, an Italian neo-Nazi, opened fire shooting at random and wounding 8 people of African origins in the city of Macerata, Marche region. Arrested immediately by the police, he declared that ‘he felt to act on behalf of Pamela Mastropietro, a young girl of 16 years old killed by a group of Nigerian drug-dealers. In the summer of 2020, (9 July) in the city of Turin, the DIGOS has sequestered neo-Nazi material and foiled a terrorist attack against immigrants, and discovered an illegal armament traffic involving the following far-right associations: Forza Nuova, and *Legio Sub-Alpina*. On the same day, but in Rivanazzano Terme (Pavia), the police have found a rocket, war weaponry, and Nazi-fascist propaganda material. Siena, 12 November 2019, the police was able to foil a terrorist attack by a far-right group and managed to sequester again, war-weaponry and 530 grams of TNT, 760 grams of gunpowder plus a device that could modify guns in order to create a silencer, and electronic devices apt to intercept the police radio communications.³⁴ As can be seen, the extremism and threat of terrorism in Italy has a double-face: radical Islamism and far-right extremism.

- **CONVICTIONS**

The convictions that we have seen in the time window under consideration (2018-2020), are related to some representatives of Islamic terrorism and neo-fascist extremism. It must be considered, however, that the Italian Justice system is very lengthy and bureaucratic though. Regarding the Islamic extremism and radicalism, the DIGOS arrested in March 2018, the jihadist Elmhadi Halili in Turin. Halili has been sentenced to 6 years in prison on terrorism and subversion charges. He is a well-known character to the Italian police for his activity of proselytism and subversion, and for being a ring leader and a recruiter for the ISIS. It also, to be remember the conviction to 6 years in prison of Fatima Sergio, first Italian foreign fighter, most probably now dead in Syria where she went to join her partner. The other conviction for jihadism is for Abderrhaim Moutaharrick, Moroccan but resident in Milan and kickboxing champion, also convicted to 6 years for terrorism charges.³⁵ On the far-right, people convicted

³⁴ <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/06/21/estrema-destra-terrorismo-nero-anche-italiano-non-e-solo-su-internet-ha-armi-bombe-razzi-e-progetta-attentati-contro>

³⁵ <https://www.osservatorioreact.it/692-2/>.

on terrorism charges are Andrea Chesi, Marco Alessandro De Caprio, Ercolano Cardinali for apology of fascism (Mancini Law) and terrorism and subversion charges.³⁶

- **THE ADEQUACY OF MEASURES TO COMBAT RADICAL MANIFESTATIONS IN SOCIETY, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RADICAL MANIFESTATIONS ON ONE HAND AND LEGISLATIVE OR LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS OF THE STATE ON THE OTHER.**

The Italian legislative system seems adequate enough to contrast any form of radicalism, and with the latest update of the legislation on this matter in 2015, as already explained above, the situation seems under control. In matter of monitoring the most radical expressions of political or religious thinking, Italy comes from a long tradition being the country at the centre of political terrorism and subversion for almost twenty years between late 1960s and early 1990s. Therefore, the Italian legislative system is already well trained for expressions of radicalism on its territory. Furthermore, the over the years war on the organised crime, especially in the south, has brought forward the creation of special police force departments military trained for a national emergency such as a terrorist or mafia attack. In many occasions, I have mentioned the DIGOS which is a political department specifically trained for the so-called ‘political crimes’. The creation of the DIGOS goes back to the period of the ‘years of lead’(1970s-1980s), and has never been dis-mantled by the Italian authorities. We can affirm that Italians, general speaking, are monitored on their political ideas and opinions. The presence of the DIGOS has been often criticised because considered a signal of distrust and control by the central authorities on the population’s free thinking. Overall, we can conclude that the Italian system of monitoring and of law enforcement on ‘ideological crimes’ seems adequate to our times, and that the latest changes to the legislation on this matter, have just managed to re-enforce further the system of control on the territory.

- **MEASURES TO SUPPORT MIGRANTS, NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES BY THE STATE**

The Italian constitution guarantees the freedom of cult (article 19), and therefore, religious minorities are protected and allowed by the Italian authorities, and by the Italian law, to worship

³⁶ <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/06/21/estrema-destra-terrorismo-nero-anche-italiano-non-e-solo-internet-ha-armi-bombe-razzi-e-progetta-attentati-contro...>

freely without any sort of impediment. The support to migrants, has instead undergone to different approaches by the Italian authorities depending on which political forces were in power. Therefore, the year period under consideration (2018-2020) has seen changes, especially after the resignation of Matteo Salvini (Lega). As already explained above, in the relevant sub-section, the migratory law was changed recently (October 2020), and the Italian authorities facilitated further the settlement and legalization of migrants arriving in the country. However, it must be said, that most of the time it is up to NGOs and charities to give a more practical and immediate support to the migrants on the territory, for often the aid coming from the official authorities is slow, disorganised, and not efficient. The creation of other structures or centres where to hold migrants arriving, the SIPROIMI, are not different in matter of fact, of the previous SPRAR structures. And, considering the lengthy process of legalization, people held in those centres, must stay a considerable amount of time before they could consider themselves free to start a new life in Italy. However, it must be said that those structures are not prisons as instead happens to illegal migrants in other countries like for instance, in Great Britain. It could be said that the chaotic situation that often affects the welcoming and settlement of the migrants arriving in the country is due more to disorganization and confusion of the Italian authorities, rather than to the Italian legislation that in many aspects is more liberal and open than the legislation in place in other western democracies on this matter.

3. THE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS, FOREIGNERS, VARIOUS ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS.

A conference held in Italy in January 2020 on the hate crime and its victims in the country, has pointed out how the xenophobic and racist campaign put into act by the far-right in the previous years, had generated an increase of hate crime according to the data provided by the OSCE and the OSCAD for Italy in collaboration with the Italian police department.

The data available for the years 2018 and 2019 give us a picture of the country where the attitude of the society towards ethnic or religious minorities has dramatically worsen if compared to the hate crime date of the years 2016 and 2017. The data for the year 2019 are slightly superior to the data of 2018 and shows that the overall racial hatred has increased as reported also by the Italian Public Security Department. For instance, the OSCAD annual report refers that the hate crimes for the year 2018 are in total 801 and the hate crimes of the year 2019 are 726 compared to the 494 cases in 2016 (when looking mainly at the bias

motivations only). Below we report a chart with the type of hate crime and the number occurred per year derived from the OSCE report on hate crimes for the years 2018-2020:³⁷

TYPE OF CRIME	2018	2019	2020*
Murder	1	1	
Physical Aggressions	205	241	
Violence Instigation	232	310	
Theft/Robbery	112	87	
Burglary	-	-	
Material Damages	85	75	
Arson Attacks	-	1	
Grave Desecrations	188	152	
Place of Worship Attacks	50	42	
Disturbing the Public	61	58	
Vandalizing Acts	15	21	
Threats/Threatening Behaviour	142	117	
Other	20	14	
TOTAL	1111	1119	

*(At the moment of writing this report there were not yet available data for the year 2020).

In 2019, OSCAD continued to work on ‘Facing the Facts’ project which was launched in 2016, and concluded on 15 October 2019. This project implemented training courses of law enforcement agencies in the field of crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination. OSCAD has been the co-beneficiary partner of the project which was led by the CEJI –a Jewish contribution to an inclusive Europe. The development of hate crime training material was concluded in 2018, and in 2019, works started to transfer training modules from the online CEJI platform to the multi-agency SISFOR platform (the law enforcement online training system). This platform will make all the training material available to the national and local law enforcement which will be able to use the various modules and adjust them according to their specific training needs.

Workshops on discrimination and hate crime were carried out for national police officers within the ODIHR ‘Training on Hate Crime for Law Enforcement (THACLE) programme. About 680 inspectors were trained through the year (2019) and more than 4000 units (agents) trained on site and more than 3,3000 units trained online.

³⁷ <https://www.hatecrime.osce.org/italy>.

This initiative has been felt necessary considering still the high level of xenophobia and racial discrimination shown by the large majority of the Italian police forces.³⁸

- **GENERAL ATTITUDE OF THE SOCIETY TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS, FOREIGNERS, VARIOUS ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS. SOCIOLOGICAL POLLS.**

The attitude of the Italian public has worsened during the last decade and this is due to several factors. First, the chronic economic and financial crisis affecting the Italian economic system overall. Second, the static dimension of the Italian society not too open toward the Other, or diversity more generally speaking. Third, the uncontrolled waves of migration especially from sub-Saharan regions on the coastline of Sicily and Sicilian islands like Lampedusa for instance. Fourth, the advent of the Italian political scene of far-right parties and the religious right that have contributed further to exasperate the attitude toward the newcomers alongside the old prejudice which affected other minorities like the Jewish community, the LGBT groups, and the Muslim community. Overall, it looks as if Italy is not culturally, politically and socially ready to be an ‘open society’ (to cite Karl Popper).

Interesting is to notice how in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic many thought and believed that the infection was brought by the migrants arriving on the shores of Sicily, and how Chinese members of the community have been object of discrimination and hate crime. The main factor of this further closeness of the Italian society toward the foreigner or the diverse, is mainly due to the popularity that the politician Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right party, Lega and former interior minister enjoyed and still does at the moment of writing. Currently, in Italy the far-right populism is quite wide spread among the average voters; Salvini’s hate campaign at the cry of ‘Italians first!’ has sunk deeply in the population, especially with a medium-low education level and the social media have been infected with fake profiles and not of people electing Salvini as the champion of their ‘Christian’ and Italian values [sic!]. The result has been that not only immigrants or representatives of minorities have been targeted via social media, but also all those who dared to criticize Salvini and his xenophobic and ultra-nationalist populist message. The result of this massive political propaganda has been an increasing indoctrination of the common man against anything that was not approved by Salvini and the far-right, especially, immigrants, Roma and Sinti communities, Muslims, and in general a growing xenophobia that would affect anybody not born and bred in Italy or of Italian descents. Anti-Semitism is not so evident but still is present and the reason it is not so ostensibly

³⁸ <https://www.osce.org/italy>.

shown is merely for political reasons. This is what is revealed by a recent opinion poll carried out in November 2019, questioning Italian public on racism and xenophobia as we can read below:

‘More than half of the Italians surveyed in a recent poll have said that racist acts were either sometimes or always “justifiable”, a finding that comes after a series of high-profile racist and anti-Semitic incidents across the country. The polling firm, SWG, questioned a sample of 1,500 people of whom 10% said racist acts were always justified and a further 45% who said racist acts could be acceptable depending on the situation. The remaining 45% said racist acts of any kind were completely unacceptable. SWG conducts the same survey once a year and for the first time in a decade the majority of those questioned did not condemn racism outright”.³⁹ Enzo Riso, the coordinator of SWG, declared : ‘ What this means is that there has been a relaxation in attitudes towards racism-not necessarily that people have become racist’.⁴⁰ The important point here is instead to notice how people have started to consider episodes or racist attitudes and declarations acceptable and ‘normal’, and how they do not feel outraged any more, and this also due to the proliferation of hate speech online. The survey quoted above shows a worrying data: the 45% that answered that racism acts could be acceptable depending on the situation. The ‘normality’ by which acts of racism and discrimination seem to be accepted by the average population shows how far the indoctrination of populist parties has gone.

Within the context of the above point, the general attitude of the society towards immigrants or various religious and ethnic minorities has not changed much compared to the previous years, but has actually worsened. A note should be made for the year 2020 though as the year of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. This latest event in global history has seen a further twist in the general attitude of the Italian populace towards foreigners, migrants or, more generally speaking, ethnic and religious minorities. The blaming of the spreading of the pandemic to immigrants and ethnic minorities has dominated social media and the public opinion especially in the first part of the year 2020. This type of smearing campaign against the non-Italians has been launched primarily by the galaxy of the ‘no-vax’ group and Covid-19 deniers present also in other countries and that in Italy seem to be led by religious right fringes within the traditionalist Catholic Church⁴¹. These social realities blame the immigrants arriving and

³⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/12/more-than-half-of-italians-in-polls-say-racism-is-justifiable>.

⁴⁰ Ibid. The Guardian, November 12, 2019.

⁴¹ See on this point footnote 2.

already living in the country of spreading the infection but then fall into contradiction when they claim the non-existence of the pandemic. This latest manifestation of xenophobia and intolerance should be read within a wider cultural contest: ‘Religious identity is important to Italians, and for almost half of the Italian population their country’s Catholic heritage influences their belief that they have a responsibility to others, including migrants and refugees. 42 per cent agree that as a Catholic country Italy should help provide for the needs of those entering Europe as migrants (while 28 per cent disagree and 27 per cent choose neither), perhaps also reflecting Italy’s heritage as a country whose people have settled across the world in other nations. However, alongside this hospitality to others is an anxiety about Italy losing its Catholic identity. 48 per cent agree that Italy’s religious heritage needs to be protected from outside faith and beliefs’.⁴² The above quote highlights an important point, such as that Italians fearing of losing their cultural heritage due to the migration especially from Muslim countries, which is in reality an unfounded fear considering the low percentage of Muslim population living legally in the country.

- **NEGATIVE SOCIAL MANIFESTATIONS TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS, FOREIGNERS, VARIOUS ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS.**

The majority of negative social manifestations towards immigrants or different ethnic minorities are the consequence of what briefly described in the previous subsections, namely, the massive political propaganda put into act by far-right populist parties like Lega (Matteo Salvini) and Fratelli d’Italia (Giorgia Meloni) who have managed in the last five years at least to monopolize the public attention on social issues with the support of the other populist party, Movimento 5 Stelle (Five Stars Movement), and also the aid of the traditionalist Catholic Church in the person of Archi-bishop Vigano’ rather vocal in matter of politics.⁴³ Most of these episodes of social negative manifestations have occurred on line as the most recent episode which sees an incursion during a zoom meeting on 18 November 2020, whereas the hacker interrupted the zoom event praising Hitler and Al Qaeda.⁴⁴ But the Italian Jewish organization ‘Osservatorio Anti-Semitismo’ has also opened a free number to call if victim or witness of

⁴² https://www.moreincommon.com/media/3hnhssh5/italy-en-final_digital_2b.pdf.

⁴³ <https://www.affaritaliani.it/politica/monsignor-vigano-accettando-biden-la-chiesa-cattolica-rinnega-cristo-704767html> .

⁴⁴ <https://www.mosaico.cem.it/attualita-e-news/italia/jewish-italy> la presentazione sotto attacco hacker.

episodes of anti-Semitism to help denouncing the several episodes which not always are denounced to competent authorities as people prefer to keep it quiet.⁴⁵

The recent episodes of anti-Semitism of which the one reported above is only the last one in order of time, should be inscribed within a specific social climate that has deteriorated in the last years. If, as already said above, Italians feel that is right to help those experiencing difficulties, it is also true that Italians feel under threat of losing their cultural and ethnic identity due to the migration phenomenon and the increasing multicultural society due to the second and even third generation of Italians born out of migrants or foreigners. Alongside the old prejudices against Jews, Muslims or Roma and Sinti, there is the fear of being treated unfairly by the Italian authorities if compared to asylum seekers or migrants arriving in Italy. In addition, there is the fear that other communities would not necessarily integrate well in the Italian society (this is true especially for the Muslims), and overall, the ‘foreigner’ is still perceived with diffidence and hatred: ‘Behind Italians’ negative sentiment about immigration and the erosion of Italian identity, there are deeper concerns about integration. Asked for their agreement or disagreement with the statement that migrants generally make efforts to integrate into Italian society, 44 per cent disagree, and only 29 per cent agree (25 per cent neither agree nor disagree)’.⁴⁶

- **RADICAL MANIFESTATIONS ON THE PART OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

In Italy, more than radical manifestations on the part of ethnic and religious groups, we should talk of manifestations oftentimes organised by associations of volunteers local and national or international, that champion the rights of minorities in the country. One of the most famous one occurred in 2018, and was named ‘Aquarius’ from the NGO vessel blocked for many nights and days outside the Italian coastline with refugees and migrants on board. One of the most chanted slogans during the manifestation was ‘Apriamo I porti, nessuna persona e’ illegale’ (Let’s open the ports, nobody is illegal). The manifestation happened in several Italian cities like Rome, Turin, Cagliari, Bari, Bologna, Palermo and Milan. The intentions of the organisers were to sensibilise the public opinion and the Italian authorities on the topic of immigration in the country against the newly approved ‘Salvini law’ on immigration issues.⁴⁷ Other types of demonstrations by ethnic minorities representatives are not been recorded for the period under

⁴⁵ <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it>

⁴⁶ https://www.moreincommon.com/media/3hnhssh5/italy-en-final_digital_2b.pdf.

⁴⁷ https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/06/12/news/migranti_aquarius_immigrazione_porti_salvini_manifestazioni-198815929/.

examination. However, if in this sub-section we need to include episodes of jihadism or recruitment of foreign fighters as radical manifestations, we could discuss the level of radicalization of the Italian Muslims and how it has changed in the last two-year period under examination in the following sub-section.

4. ACTIVITIES OF RADICAL GROUPS, RIGHT WING RADICAL GROUPS AND PARTIES

Italy has seen an increasing presence of neo-Nazi organisations and nationalist groups in the last two years; this due to the progressive legitimization of well-known and declared political parties and movements. In specific cases, self-declared neo-Nazi organizations like CasaPound or Forza Nuova had their own candidates both to the local and general elections with the electoral programme oftentimes openly racist and anti-immigrants.

Thanks also to the popularity of characters like Matteo Salvini (Lega) and Giorgia Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia), and of their massive populist and ultra-nationalist propaganda online⁴⁸, these realities have acquired more strength and legitimacy among the electorate.

In Italy at the moment there are several neo-Nazi groups but many of them are confined mainly to the world of the football hooligans, which has become in time a privileged channel for those organizations to do proselytism and political militancy. Here below there will be a brief analysis and description of the main neo-Nazi and nationalist groups active on the territory at the moment of writing.

- **NEO-NAZI AND NATIONALIST GROUPS, MOVEMENTS, POLITICAL PARTIES**

As already said above, in Italy there is a quite wide spread presence of neo-fascist groups. The reasons for such a presence are multiple. First, Italy historically has never completely and seriously undergone a process of de-nazification. This means that Italy was the only country in western Europe to have a neo-fascist party sitting legitimately in the Parliament in the post-war period. Second, this indulgence and amnesty towards fascism and fascists, has given the way to a progressive and slowly acceptance by the general public of certain realities. If one goes through the post-war history of the country, will realise how difficult it has been to have a proper legislation on hate crime and discrimination until recently. In such a social and cultural climate, neo-Nazi organisations have become a 'normal' reality for the local population. The

⁴⁸ <https://www.giorgiameloni.it> and <https://www.lega.it>.

two most relevant organizations in this sense, Casa Pound Italia and Forza Nuova, are therefore quite active on the territory and often champion the defence of the ‘Italian’ traditional values [sic!] and sporting strong anti-minority battles. CasaPound Italia is more secular and oriented towards social issues, while Forza Nuova is focused more on religious issues (its members are all traditionalist Catholics like the group’s founder Roberto Fiore, ex neo-fascist terrorist). The two groups are also present all over the Italian territory and in certain province, like the province of Bolzano (north of the country) they have also managed to gain a couple of town hall councillors.⁴⁹

The most worrying factor is that both Casa Pound and Forza Nuova are becoming accepted by the local population as well as their political proclaims and social actions, considering that often these two groups substitute the social services in the most deprived areas of especially big cities like Rome and Milan. CasaPound in particular, is officially endorsed by Matteo Salvini (Lega), with a publishing house, ‘Altofonte’, and a radio station, ‘Radio Bandiera Nera’ has managed to establish a considerable follow-up especially among the 18-30 age group. Often responsible for violent acts against political opponents or minorities of any type, they also seem to escape easily the law.

As already briefly explained in the previous sub-section, in Italy the really influential nationalist forces are represented by the two political parties aforementioned: the Lega and the Fratelli d’Italia. Matteo Salvini, leader of the political party Lega, is the major protagonist of the shift in the Italian population on issues like minorities or immigration. The propaganda machine that he has often used based on basic populist slogans ‘Prima gli Italiani’ (Italians first) and anti-establishment populist rhetoric now added the anti-Covid propaganda alongside the other party, Fratelli d’Italia, which is at the moment of writing the most influential far-right nationalist party active in Italy.⁵⁰ The Fratelli d’Italia is in matter of fact the heir of the historic neo-fascist party, Movimento Sociale Italiano/ Alleanza Nazionale, now recycled in a populist, anti-Europe, anti-establishment party. The influence that their two leaders and the massive presence of these two parties have on national territory is worrying to say the least. If we think for instance, that since a few years ago the party Lega was not popular in the south and now instead take massive consensus, this indicates that the social and political mapping of the Italian electorate has changed for the worst. The Lega was a party born at the beginning of the 1990s to separate the north of the country and making it an independent country with racist instances

⁴⁹ <https://www.casapounditalia.org/Bolzano-iannone-casapound-bonazza/>.

⁵⁰ <https://www.corrierenazionale.it/2020/11/08/sondaggi-politici-meloni-piace-piu-di-salvini/>.

against the populations of the south. Now we witness that the Lega and its leader are over popular also in the south, that gives the reader a certain understanding of the social and political involution of the country. The popularity of the Lega party in the south is evident also in the several mayors elected in the party in several towns and small villages in the south. The easy rhetoric of the party leader, and the chronic economic crisis and widespread un-employment, together with the low education level of the southern population explain easily the reasons for such popularity.

5. ISLAMISTS

Radicalization of Muslim communities in Italy is a phenomenon that must be addressed. Recent outburst of radical views of Islam, theoretical and logistical support for global jihad, and threat of terrorist attacks on the Italian soil raise issues of integration and peaceful coexistence. In order to avoid future prospects of cultural, social, and religious clashes, joint academics, officials, and policy makers must cooperate to face the growing radicalization of Muslim communities.

Demographically, Muslims number between 1 and 1,200, 000 million and represent 1.5% of the Italian population. Muslim presence in Italy is strictly related to global migration flows. Since the 1990s, Muslim immigration has increased exponentially, currently representing one third of total migration flow to Italy. Muslims' geographical provenience is heterogeneous, as it interests the whole Muslim world. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslims comes from Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. Muslims are mainly concentrated in the more industrialized northern regions, such as Lombardia, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, and Piemonte. Milan numbers the largest Muslim community in the country, followed by Turin. Age estimates suggest Muslims population to be young. The main sectors of occupation are catering, construction, manufacturing, and import-export. Finally, the great majority of Muslims is Sunni, while only 2% is Shiite. Most Muslims share a traditional view of Islam, as sermons' attendance amounts to 6- 7% on a weekly base. In all this, the Italian authorities have also watched the possible spreading of jihadism and radicalization among the Italian Muslim communities.⁵¹ The recent legislation changes in matter of immigration and terrorism charges that we have briefly examined at the beginning of this report, are indicative of the fear that also in Italy we can experience episodes of Islamic terrorism as those experience in France in the last five years.

⁵¹ https://www.ict.org/ictFiles/0/Report_on_islamic_community_in_italy.pdf

The Italian Muslim community is various and diverse, and the escalation of Islamic terrorism in the last twenty years (since 9/11) has focused on two fundamental factors: 1) that terrorism can strike anybody and everywhere, and in everywhere; 2) the risk that the so-called ‘home-grown’ terrorism can pose, taking into consideration the ‘second generation’ terrorists. It has been observed by the Italian authorities⁵² that the activity of subversion and terrorism at the hands of radical Islamist groups occurs in the large majority of cases, and affects mainly extremists separate from the international organizations like for instance, the ISIS. The typical subject who is radicalised (above all on internet), lives often in difficult social circumstances, and suffers from a fragile psychological balance. The home-grown terrorism in Italy has arrived a few years later than in other European countries like for instance, France, Belgium, Germany or Great Britain (this is because of demographics reasons) for the second generation of Muslim in Italy is being living in the country has just reached the adult age.

The Italian authorities have launched a specific programme to contrast and fight this new type of radicalization and Islamic terrorism. It is concentrated on 1) Internet, because it plays a fundamental role in the recruitment and communication channel for Jihadists who often use the web for their self-radicalization process; 2) illegal immigration in the country could be an element to introduce in the country radicalized individuals, especially as consequence of the Arab Spring in several Muslim countries of the Mediterranean area; 3) finally, the process of integration is fundamental in order to build a solid cultural bridge between the two cultures. In the period under examination for the present report (2018-2020), there are no episodes to denounce on this matter. In general, Italy has never been hit by some as other countries. The reasons according to the Italian experts in International terrorism are that in Italy the second, or even third generation of Italian Muslim is still too young to be radicalized, while in the above mentioned European countries the Muslim migration goes back to even forty years ago, and numerically is larger than the overall Muslim population in Italy,⁵³ but another reason according to the experts, is also that the ISIS hit countries of which wish to take revenge for their policies, especially in the Middle-East, and Italy has never acted at this level.⁵⁴

The ISIS militants are very well informed on everything that regards the organization, they might ignore other situations and dynamics of the reality but are obsessively interested in the ISIS. Therefore, events or news that might get unnoticed if they instead regard the ISIS, are

⁵² Lorenzo Vidino, *Il Jihadismo Autoctono in Italia: Nascita, Sviluppo, E Dinamiche di Radicalizzazione* (Brussels: European Foundation For Democracy/Milan: Istituto Per Gli Studi Di Politica Internazionale), 2014.

⁵³ https://www.tvsvizzera.it/tvs/attentati-terroristici_ecco-perche-l'italia-non-e-ancora-stata-attaccata/43459006.

⁵⁴ Alessandro Orsini, *Gli Attentati dell'Isis Nell'Europa Occidentale, Un'Interpretazione Sociologica*, ‘Democracy and Security Review’, Anno VIII, No.3, 2018, published in 2019.

taken with attention by the radicalised militants who live in a secretive galaxy where the only thing that counts is the organization of which they are members. This why, according to the experts, there have not been attacks in Italy as for instance, in France or other European countries. To summarize, because in Italy the second or third generation of Italian Muslims is numerically lower than in other European countries, and because Italy is not considered an enemy by the ISIS and other Islamic terrorist organizations, the country has not experienced in so far terrorist attacks although the Italian authorities control and monitor the territory for any possible form of Islamic radicalization.

At the organizational level, Muslim representation is complex. Muslims in Italy are divided on cultural, political, and religious lines. Foreign states, mosques, and cultural organizations compete for their legacy and representation. The result is a myriad of organizations spread throughout the country. Such fragmentation affects Islam's institutional representation and relation with the Italian State. Still in competition with each other, Islamic organizations are yet to reach an entente with the government. Nowadays, Muslims rely on 18 main organizations, 735 worship places, more than 100 mosques, 159 Islamic centres, 88 Koranic schools, countless websites, and 12 national channels available on satellite TV. The most important institutions are UCOIL, the Islamic Cultural Institute of Viale Jenner, Milan, COREIS, the Islamic Cultural Center of Italy, the Muslim World League, the Al-Rahman Mosque, and the Great Mosque of Rome.⁵⁵ The overall Muslim population is divided in Sunni Muslims and only a small percentage is Shi'ia Muslims as already stated in another sub-section of the present report.

As far as national security is concerned, radicalization of Muslim communities represents a real threat because we are now in the period of time when many youths belonging to the second and third generation Muslims are beginning to turn eighteen years of age. It has been flagged to the Italian security forces that some social and religious organizations are connected to potentially dangerous actors. The headquarters of the Muslim World League and the Islamic Cultural Center of Italy are directly run by Saudi Arabia. Iran administers the European Islamic Center in Rome and UCOIL has decennial connections with the Muslim Brotherhood. This reality is seen with suspicion but tolerated because, as repeated in other occasions, Italy does not seem exposed to terrorist activities on its territory. But this does not mean that radicalism

⁵⁵ <https://www.lenius.it/mussulmani-in-italia>.

has not spread across social organizations and mosque networks. Sometimes extremism is limited to rhetoric, other times it can actively or passively trigger terrorism. A number of social and religious leaders have been promoting Wahhabi or Salafi versions of Islam, racial hatred, religious intolerance, and jihad through recruitment of martyrs, funds, and weapons. Overall, radical organizations amount to 4, radical mosques to 108, and radical Imams to 18. Further, there are 11 mosques and Islamic centres engaged in terrorist activities. Renowned for its illegal businesses, for almost two decades the most controversial organization has been the Islamic Cultural Institute of Viale Jenner in Milan. The institute has been proven to host terrorists and recruit funds and martyrs, some of them known for carrying out suicide operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even more disturbingly, a number of radical cells planned terrorist attacks in Milan, Bologna, and Cremona, but nothing ever happened. More precisely, the number of attempted attacks amounted to 6 but, as already said, nothing ever happened. In 2009, in Milan, the centre of Islamic radicalism, Italy witnessed the first terrorist attack on its soil. Luckily, the attack did not cause significant damage as it was only partially successfully carried out.⁵⁶

Interaction between Italy and Muslim immigrants is a relative young phenomenon. Contrary to countries like Germany, France, and the UK, Muslim presence in Italy became relevant only in recent years. Seeking better living conditions, Muslim immigrants began to settle throughout the peninsula, especially in the more industrialized north. Though mostly from Arab countries, Muslims form a variegated and heterogeneous community. Different cultural, social, and religious backgrounds assemble a complex puzzle of the Muslim population. Such division is reflected into their institutional fragmentation and representation in Italy, which is also divided on national and religious basis. Mostly secular, the great Muslims' majority seeks integration and peaceful coexistence with local communities. Unfortunately, a small, but significant minority of believers promotes extreme visions of Islam, rejecting integration. Radical doctrines triggered theoretical and practical support for Islamic terrorism and worldwide Jihad. Preoccupied with issues of national security, Italian Secret Services have been monitoring, arresting, and expelling dangerous subjects.⁵⁷ Such actions successfully prevented attacks on Italian soil, but inevitably enlarged the gap between Italians and Muslims.

6. HATE CRIMES, LAW ENFORCEMENT, CRIMINAL CASES, RACIST ATTACKS, VIOLENCE AND TERROR.

⁵⁶ https://www.ict.org.il/ictFiles/0/Report_on_Islamic_Community_in_Italy.pdf.

⁵⁷ <https://www.gnosis.aisi.gov.it/sitoRivista2.nsf/servnavig/4>.

The Italian Police recorded circa over one-thousands of hate crimes in 2019 (data not available yet for the 2020). Of these hate crimes, 310 were inciting to violence; 241 were physical assault, and only one case was homicide. The cases recorded were hate crimes having ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation as well as bias against Roma and Sinti, and people with disability. The targeted group was immigrants and, more generally, foreigners, this is why most of the known hate crimes were related to racism and xenophobia. In 2019, 805 police reports concerned bias. Among these crimes, the most frequent ones were incitement to violence, desecration of graves, physical assaults, and threats. People with disabilities were the second most targeted group.⁵⁸ Although in the last two years (2018-2020) in Italy the number of hate crime rose, a survey conducted in 2019, demonstrated that the Italian believed that the measures taken by the Italian authorities to fight discrimination were necessary.⁵⁹

In favour	59%
Against	15%
Abstainer	15%
Don't Know	11%

In October 2019, the Italian Senate voted in favour of the establishment of a special committee to combat racial hate. The commission was proposed by the Senator Liliana Segre, Holocaust survivor, and was named ‘Segre Commission’.

7. CONCLUSION FOR THE PERIOD

The writing of the present report has not been an easy task to complete. Many factors concurred in the difficulty of writing a complete and exhaustive report as requested. First, the almost impossibility to gather data for the year 2020 due to 1) the global pandemic which has reduced the attention on topics like xenophobia or racism; and 2) the scarce availability of relevant data for the year 2020, usually available from NGOs and official authorities in the year 2021. However, a few considerations should be made. The first one is that finally, on 5 October 2020, the Italian authorities have amended the ‘Salvini Law’ and the ‘Salvini-bis’ both on immigration and security which penalised heavily the migrants and, more in general, ethnic and religious minorities within the migration galaxy. Some critics are not completely satisfied with it because several of the previous articles have been maintained but, overall, the new

⁵⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/660660/hate-crimes-recorded-by-the-police-italy-by-type/>.

⁵⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1068249/opinion-on-an-extraordinary-commission-against-racism>.

legislation approved in October 2020, result to be a 'lighter' version of the previous one and this gives some hope to the migrants arriving to Italy and to all the NGOs, and charities that daily work and deal with the immigration problems. Second consideration is that unfortunately, thanks to the massive propaganda, especially on social media, Salvini and far-right movements have become well established realities politically and socially, and have contributed to wide spread even more xenophobia and racism toward those who are perceived as different by the mainstream population. In this battle to defend the 'different', paradoxically, the only moral and political force that was brave enough to stand against the far-right populism of Salvini et al. had been the Vatican in the person of Pope Francis. In Italy, the traditional left-wing party PD, seems to have lost consensus with the working class who now turns more easily to the far-right parties and movements. Overall, we can affirm that in the last two years (2018-2020) the Italian population has been more exposed to populist ultra-nationalism which has created especially on social media like FaceBook, a large consensus among the average electorate. The overall situation has remained unchanged since the last report in 2017, the main reason due probably to a critical political climate and the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic.

As already said, some steps have been taken in matter of regulating the presence of immigrants and refugees or asylum seekers in the country. But there is still more work to be done. The main point is to change the current legislation in granting citizenship to second or third generation immigrants and agree finally on the *ius soli* rather than the *ius sanguinis* in order to solve the legal problems encountered by this category of people in their every-day life. Also, another point to be considered is the presence of immigration centres, which are often kept in bad conditions and without taking into consideration the individual needs of the people held in there. The hard work done by the NGOs and charities should also be sided by the full support of the authorities, and this is not always the case.