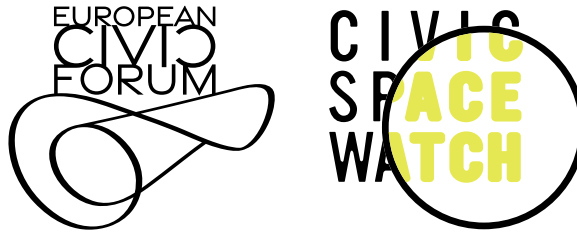


CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2025

Italy

By Arci





ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was published by the European Civic Forum (ECF) in June 2025, with chapters written by its secretariat, member organisations, and partner organisations, including as part of the Net4Defenders project. Much of the content originally appeared as part of ECF's submission to the European Commission's Rule of Law consultation. Each chapter reflects the views and analysis of its respective author. For more information about the European Civic Forum, please visit www.civic-forum.eu.

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Arci is a cultural and social promotion association with hundreds of thousands of members and working through a network of community clubs, houses, and mutual aid societies across Italy. Arci promotes culture, fundamental rights, solidarity, participation and democracy for all. The association operates in local, national and international contexts, contributing to strengthening the European democratic public space.



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Key civic space trends

-  Restrictive laws limit the right to protest as the climate justice and Palestine solidarity movements are targeted
-  CSOs working on migration continue to face criminalisation
-  Proposal to remove tax-exempt status for CSOs a concern

Summary

Civic Space in Italy is rated as “narrowed” by the CIVICUS Monitor.¹ In its 2024 rule of law report, the European Commission recommended that the government take steps to mitigate “any risk of negative impacts on press freedom” and “ensure that rules or mechanisms are in place to provide funding for public service media” to ensure independence. The Italian government has taken no steps to implement these recommendations and overall, the environment for civil society further deteriorated in 2024.

High-level officials, including the deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, continued to publicly vilify civil society organisations (CSOs) working on migration. Several regulatory

changes have further enabled the criminalisation of solidarity. The government has continuously accused the judiciary of being “politicised” and of obstructing the government. Several restrictions have been imposed on the right to protest via new security measures which have been used to target environmental and climate justice and the Palestine solidarity movements. In addition, the government has failed to systematically consult civil society on newly proposed regulations which affect civic freedoms. Of serious concern is the proposal of a regulatory intervention, currently under discussion, which aims to eliminate the VAT exclusion regime for non-profit associations, effectively placing them on the same footing as for-profit companies.

1. <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/italy/>

Institutional, political, and socio-economic landscape

The Italian context is characterised by a long period of criminalisation of human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), driven primarily by leading figures of the far-right parties currently in government.

Several high-level officials in the current government, in particular Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini,² Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi³ and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni,⁴ have repeatedly launched public attacks against migrant rights organisations and, at times, against individual staff members of these organisations. CSOs and migrants' rights defenders were among the first targets, particularly those involved in sea rescue operations. These organisations were the subject of a smear campaign accusing them of smuggling, without any proof of complicity.⁵

A notable case is the ongoing trial of Matteo Salvini for his 2019 decision as interior minister to impose a landing ban on the Open Arms ship which carried 147 migrants on board. Salvini is accused of kidnapping and refusing to allow people who needed and were entitled to assistance to disembark. The trial was used by Salvini's Lega party, along with the government (including the prime minister), as a pretext to launch a campaign against judges, CSOs and the opposition, accusing them of allowing millions of foreigners to enter Italy without any control. This has further exacerbated the climate of criminalisation and hatred against NGOs engaged in sea rescue.⁶

In September 2024, a series of online attacks and threats against judges involved in the case led to increased security measures for the magistrates. The government accused them of acting politically against the deputy prime minister, and as a result, they found themselves at the centre of a major media defamation campaign.⁷

Between 2017 and 2024, various regulatory measures affecting migration policy have consistently restricted the operational capacity of NGOs, criminalised their work (punishable with harsh sentences and fines) and introduced harsh penalties for their activities related to migration.

More recently, criminalisation and attacks against climate activists have followed the same pattern. Following a massive media campaign against climate activists, including public vilification by Salvini and other government officials,⁸ a series of regulatory measures have criminalised the main forms of environmental protest in an attempt to silence these movements.⁹

While there was no specific legislation aimed at targeting LGBTQI+ organisations, government representatives have directly attacked the LGBTQI+ movement and policies related to emotional education and combating homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.¹⁰ There have also been several acts of homophobia¹¹ and violent attacks against LGBTQI+ activists.¹² The absence of a law to combat and punish discrimination and homophobic violence is concerning after the so-called DDL Zan was rejected on several occasions by the parliament, leaving a regulatory vacuum.¹³

2. https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/01/23/news/salvini_ho_le_prove_di_contatti_tra_ong_e_trafficienti_-217266201/; <https://www.iltempo.it/politica/2024/11/10/video/matteo-salvini-centri-sociali-video-zecche-rosse-bologna-lepore-40845768/>

3. https://www.lastampa.it/politica/2022/11/15/news/verice_piantedosi-capigruppo_sui_migranti_ce_lipotesi_della_confisca_delle_navi_ong-12242162/

4. https://www.facebook.com/giorgiameloni.paginaufficiale/posts/open-arms-una-delle-tante-ong-che-agevola-gli-scafisti-nel-mediterraneo-ha-denun-10156452355807645/?locale=pt_BR; <https://askanews.it/2024/10/15/migranti-meloni-contro-sea-watch-parole-vergognose-getta-maschera/>

5. <https://www.internazionale.it/reportage/zach-campbell/2021/05/03/italia-migranti-ong-strategia>

6. <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/open-arms-pm-diritti-umani-prevalgono-sovrana-salvini-ho-difeso-confini-AFqNMPuD>; <https://www.iltempo.it/politica/2024/09/15/news/open-arms-salvini-matone-magistrati-politicizzati-si-candidino-con-ilaria-salis-40348110/>; https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2024/09/16/video/salvini-open_arms_gasparri_posizione_magistratura_e_eversiva-423503574/

7. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/topnews/2024/09/19/open-arms-minacce-a-pm-processo-e-allarme-sicurezza_18e9399e-d20f-4521-8830-f5b-77b0c15b9.html

8. https://x.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1714944104474255624?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1714944104474255624%7Ctwgr%5E80d03058d13a085714e886d072f12db9988f5896%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fanpage.it%2Fpolitica%2Fsalvini-contro-ultima-generazione-sono-eco-imbecilli-multe-piu-care-per-chi-blocca-la-strada%2F

9. <https://www.indifesadi.org/2024/07/05/diritto-non-crimine/>; <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2023/01/15/salvini-contro-gli-ambientalisti-di-ultima-generazione-sono-vandali-meritano-di-andare-in-galera/6936848/>

10. <https://x.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1838843809125261385>

11. <https://www.omofobia.org/sito/cronache-di-ordinaria-omofobia-da-maggio-2023-a-marzo-2024/>; https://www.ansa.it/trentino/notizie/2024/11/08/bandiera-arco-baleno-bruciata-a-trento-arcigay-promuove-sit-in_72f0d36d-2f1e-4d84-a21d-390d81969ade.html

12. <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2025/01/aggresione-omofobia-a-roma-calcio-e-pugni-contro-una-coppia-gay-la-notte-di-capodanno-4395a352-ba55-46b0-903d-de08a41bacc0.html>

13. <https://www.wired.it/attualita/politica/2020/06/23/omofobia-italia-legge-zan/>

A political campaign was launched by the prime minister's Brothers of Italy party against same-sex parent families with a circular letter from the interior minister to the prefects that instructed mayors not to transcribe the birth certificates of children born to same-sex parents.¹⁴ In recent months, partly due to the European election campaign, the level of confrontation, especially in the public narrative, has intensified, making this an important issue in the political debate.

On 23 April 2024, the Italian Senate approved a law allowing anti-abortion groups access to facilities for women that are considering terminating their pregnancies, such as abortion counselling services, public support centres, family planning centres (*consultori*) and hospitals. The amendment, introduced by Brothers of Italy,¹⁵ proposed that women considering an abortion should first listen to the foetus' heartbeat, and was approved as part of Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).¹⁶

Based on the amendment that was passed, pro-life associations are now able to enter the counselling centres women must visit to obtain the medical certificates required for hospital-based voluntary termination of pregnancy. Under the wording of the law, it allows the "involvement of third sector entities who have qualified experience in the support of motherhood".¹⁷ Multiple individuals, political parties, associations, and trade unions have voiced their concerns about the new law.¹⁸ This campaign culminated with the passing of a law which makes surrogacy a punishable offence, even if conducted abroad.¹⁹

The government's continuous attacks against the judiciary for "being politicised and for trying to obstruct government action"²⁰ are worrying and have been condemned by the organisation Magistrates Européens

pour la Démocratie et les Libertés (MEDEL). The most recent attack is in the case of the judiciary's decisions on the application of the Italy-Albania protocol in which several magistrates rejected the request to validate the detentions of migrants in Albanian centres in the application of a European Court of Justice ruling on the interpretation of what is a "safe country".²¹ The climate of repeated confrontation is combined with a series of proposed laws aimed at limiting the action of magistrates. This includes a law on the separation of careers²² and a proposal to limit the publication of wiretaps contained in judicial acts.²³

It is important to highlight that the Italian government has not established an independent human rights institution, despite repeated calls from the European Commission and ongoing demands from CSOs.

In 2024, the criminalisation of sea rescue NGOs continued, with new rules included in the latest Flows Decree, which limit operations at sea by extending sanctions to the shipowner and making it easier to confiscate equipment in the case of a repeat offense. The same decree also transfers the jurisdiction for the validation of migrant detentions in centres in Albania from specialised immigration judges to the Court of Appeal. This change legitimises the idea that the problem is the judges who interpret and apply international law and European Court of Justice rulings on the Italian government's derogatory regulatory actions.²⁴

In the face of these challenges, the level of coordination and cooperation between CSOs has improved, and several informal networks advocating for issues such as fundamental rights, have sprung up to unite diverse groups including trade unions, NGOs, associations, and political organisations.

14. <https://lespresso.it/c/politica/2024/3/15/il-ministero-di-piantedosi-continua-a-prendersela-con-i-figli-delle-famiglie-arcobaleno/50377>

15. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/italys-new-law-giving-pro-lifers-access-to-abortion-clinics-stirs-debate/>

16. https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/italys-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en

17. Unofficial translation by Arci.

18. https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/04/23/news/fiducia_pnrr_diventa_legge_pro_vita_consultori_aborto_sanita-422713756/

19. <https://www.wired.it/article/gestazione-per-altri-reato-universale-voto-senato/>; <https://www.altalex.com/documents/news/2024/10/21/la-maternita-surrogata-diventa-reato-universale>

20. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2024/10/19/salvini-mobilitazione-contro-la-magistratura-politicizzata_639fdb9-501c-46d5-9160-84c5bb0c-deae.html

21. <https://www.magistraturademocratica.it/articolo/dichiarazione-sugli-attacchi-contro-la-magistratura-italiana>; <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2024/10/migranti-a-bari-i-12-rientrati-albania-il-governo-decreto-su-paesi-sicuri-e-polemica-37f0d322-22a1-4acf-ba96-e919aa1d58b9.html>

22. <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2024/12/09/separazione-carriere-camera-riforma-sogno-berlusconi/7797161/>

23. https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2024/12/09/news/bavaglio_stampa_separazione_delle_carriere_riforma_giustizia-423867671/

24. <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/migranti-si-camera-fiducia-decreto-flussi-lavoratori-extra-ue-paesi-sicuri-fino-blitz-competenze-giudici-AG5ZG8OB>

Regulatory environment for civic freedoms

Freedom of association

The general climate towards CSOs and human rights activists has deteriorated in recent years. To date, no government interventions have been aimed directly or indirectly at dissolving NGOs. This is partly due to Italy's stringent regulatory framework and constitutional constraints that guarantee freedom of association. The disbandment of an organisation is permitted only in the case of terrorist organisations or organisations undermining the democratic order, and, even then, only following an investigation carried out by the judiciary.

In recent months, a series of regulatory and administrative interventions combined with criminalising rhetoric further worsened the enabling environment and contributed to a considerable erosion of the right to protest and the ability of CSOs and activists to operate.

In particular, the decree-law of 2 January 2023,²⁵ also known as the NGO decree or Piantedosi decree, as well as the new regulations of the interior ministry on the indication of the Place of Safety (POS), have posed administrative burdens on NGOs conducting sea rescues. These include continuous administrative stoppages²⁶ and the assignment of distant ports for landing, with the clear intention of increasing the costs of managing operations and moving them as far away as possible from the area of operations.²⁷ If an NGO violates the provisions, the ship's captain receives a fine of between €10,000 and €50,000.²⁸

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Over the past few years, governments have adopted a series of measures restricting the right to protest. These regulations, embedded in various decrees containing security measures, have introduced stricter precautionary measures and increased penalties and sanctions

In September 2024, the government announced the so-called "Flows Decree", a new, more restrictive intervention for the activities of NGOs engaged in sea rescue, regulating the quotas for the entry of foreign citizens into Italian territory.²⁹

Law No. 6 of 22 January 2024, the so-called "Ecovandals law" disproportionately targets environmental and climate rights activists. It introduces both criminal and administrative sanctions³⁰ for those who deface, even symbolically and temporarily, public buildings and cultural or landscape assets.³¹ Specifically, offenders may face fines ranging from €10,000 to €60,000, depending on the severity of the offence. Additionally, imprisonment of up to five years is possible for those who cause damage in museums or during demonstrations.

It should be noted that most of the criminal offences and sanctions included in these laws were found to be contrary to the constitution and international standards, leading to acquittals or dismissals by the courts in cases against NGOs and individual activists. In many cases, the legal incompatibility of these laws was well known to the legislature even before they were passed. However, their approval was used as a tool to force organisations into costly legal battles and create a climate of criminalisation and stigma around their activities, so that they implement deterrent policies. It could be argued that the approval of most of these regulations has a similar chilling effect on CSOs and HRDs as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs).³²

against activists participating in demonstrations. The measures have also increased the arbitrariness of the authorities in assessing law enforcement's relevant

²⁵. <https://www.valigiablu.it/ong-soccorso-mare-decreto-piantedosi-effetti/> ; <https://pagellapolitica.it/articoli/approvazione-decreto-ong>

²⁶. https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/decreto-ong-approvato-camera-porto-sbarco-multe-ecco-cosa-prevede-AEwxm2nC?refresh_ce=1

²⁷. https://www.repubblica.it/italia/2024/08/18/news/navi_ong_rotte_porti_lontani-423450835/

²⁸. <https://archiviopenale.it/File/DownloadArticolo?codice=f7bb411e-7799-4664-988e-6a4ecc0e459d&idarticolo=43645> ; <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/sicurezza-arriva-codice-condotta-le-ong-nuove-norme-contro-femminicidi-e-baby-gang-AEu9OPSC>

²⁹. <https://ilmanifesto.it/ong-e-migranti-il-governo-prepara-la-nuova-stretta> ; <https://ilmanifesto.it/nel-decreto-flussi-stretta-sulle-ong-e-piu-respingimenti>

³⁰. <https://www.wired.it/article/ecovandali-legge-governo-meloni-proteste-clima-ultima-generazione/>

³¹. <https://www.amnesty.it/il-ddl-contro-gli-attivisti-climatici-e-legge/>

³². <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2024/04/inchiesta-trapani-equipaggi-navi-ong-in-21-prosciolti-dall'accusa-di-favoreggiamento-dell'immigrazione-clan-destina-fdae74e2-ceed-4aa9-bacd-b0fb46e24d3d.html> ; <https://www.sistemapenale.it/it/scheda/caso-sea-watch-carola-rackete-archivate-le-accuse-di-favoreggiamento-dell'immigrazione-irregolare-e-rifiuto-di-obbedienza-a-nave-da-guerra> ; <https://www.medicisenzafrontiere.it/news-e-storie/news/tribunale-del-riesame-nessun-traffico-illecito-di-rifiuti-sulla-nave-aquarius/>

conduct. These developments take place in a climate of ongoing criminalisation of the right to protest, further intensified by a stigmatising narrative in the media.³³

Among the precautionary measures is the *foglio di via*, a preventive administrative measure banning an individual from being present in a specific territory other than one's place of residence for a period of time. Over the past year, this measure has been increasingly applied particularly to climate activists, especially from the groups Ultima Generazione and Extinction Rebellion.

Additionally, several legislative proposals from the governing majority aim to limit the application of the torture offence by ensuring greater impunity for police officers in cases of violence or arbitrary detention.³⁴ Despite requests from civil society and some opposition bills, Italian law does not oblige police officers to display an identification code or use body cameras, which complicates efforts to hold individual officers accountable for violence during demonstrations.³⁵ Italian law stipulates that event organisers must notify the authorities when holding public assemblies without requiring formal authorisation. However, authorities may prohibit such events for reasons of "public order".

The *foglio di via*, which is provided for in the anti-mafia code and linked to the social risk of the subject to whom it is applied, has been constantly misused and

applied to activists as a repressive measure rather than a preventive one.³⁶ Other preventive measures such as the *Daspo*, which limits the participation in sporting events of persons considered socially dangerous, and the special surveillance enabled by the anti-mafia and anti-terrorism code have been applied in recent years to repress social movements. In particular, over the past year, these measures were increasingly applied against climate activists, especially from the movements Ultima Generazione and Extinction Rebellion,³⁷ and activists expressing solidarity with Palestine.³⁸

Among the incidents that affected the Extinction Rebellion activists was the repression of a non-violent demonstration in front of the interior ministry, which ended with 75 activists being detained for more than 10 hours and more than 30 travel warrants being issued.³⁹

On 5 October, a national demonstration for Palestine was banned in Rome for the risk of "serious disturbances to public order and security." The "preventative" ban was accompanied by preventative measures (travel restrictions and prevention from reaching Rome and the location of the demonstration) that drastically restricted the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly of thousands of people.⁴⁰ The demonstration ended with clashes between demonstrators and police and was characterised by the use of excessive force by the security forces, which included tear gas and a water cannon.⁴¹

DDL 1660

On 18 September, a new security decree, DDL 1660,⁴² was approved by the Chamber of Deputies. It introduced significant changes to the criminal code, including 20 new offences, the extension of penalties and aggravating circumstances, and, in some cases, the expansion of penalties for already existing crimes. For example, this law criminalises roadblocks, making perpetrators punishable by up to two years imprisonment, and peaceful protests, with an aggravating circumstance for those opposing the construction of major public infrastructure, and imposes penalties of up to 20 years for those protesting in Detention Centres for Repatriation (CPR) and prisons.⁴³

The law has raised concerns among CSOs and at the institutional level. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) expressed concerns that "the draft law has several shortcomings that could hinder the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the prohibition of ill-treatment and the rights to liberty and security of persons, the freedoms of peaceful assembly, expression and movement, as well as the rights to a fair trial and respect for private and family life."⁴⁴

33. <https://www.amnesty.it/barometro-dellodio-allarmante-erosione-del-diritto-di-protesta/>

34. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2023/03/24/tortura-alla-camera-la-proposta-di-legge-di-fdi-per-abrogare-il-reato-protestano-le-opposizioni_daad62a7-baa1-4a06-854a-a1ff37511866.html

35. <https://pagellapolitica.it/articoli/codici-identificativi-italia-polizia>

36. <https://www.amnesty.it/fogli-di-via-strumento-di-prevenzione-o-di-repressione/>

37. <https://extinctionrebellion.it/press/2024/01/15/centinaia-di-denunce-e-fogli-di-via-in-tutta-italia/>

38. <https://www.editorialedomani.it/fatti/corteo-palestina-roma-scontri-polizia-200-allontanati-fogli-di-via-arresto-fermi-reazioni-i6y1ssf9>

39. <https://extinctionrebellion.it/press/2024/11/23/violazione-foglio-di-via-roma/>

40. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/EUR3087132024ENGLISH.pdf>

41. <https://www.amnesty.it/manifestazione-del-5-ottobre-a-roma-gravi-violazioni-dei-diritti-umani/>

42. Full name: 1660 Relating to Countering Terrorism, Public Security, Protection of Personnel in Service and Prison Regulations in Italy

43. <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2024/10/01/ddl-sicurezza-cpr-carceri-proteste>

44. https://legislationline.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/2024-05-27%20-%20Opinion_Italy_Draft%20Law%20on%20Public%20Security%20-%20final.pdf

Equally worrying is the establishment of the so-called “Red Zones” set up in several cities on the instruction of the interior ministry, in which circulation is restricted to persons identified as “harassing and aggressive, dedicated to committing crimes and not in compliance with immigration regulations.” This restricts the

constitutionally guaranteed freedom of movement and by extension could represent a restriction on the freedom of peaceful assembly should the same zones be identified as places of assembly for public demonstrations.⁴⁵

Freedom of expression and the right to privacy

In recent years, an ongoing degradation of freedom of expression, particularly press and media freedom, has been observed. In 2024 alone, Italy dropped from 41st to 46th place in the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index.⁴⁶

A series of regulatory interventions have prohibited journalists from publishing investigations that are within pretrial detention orders, in full or in the form of excerpts (which are public) until the conclusion of the preliminary investigation.⁴⁷ A proposed new regulation, under consideration, aims to strengthen this prohibition of publication to all precautionary measures and introduces financial burdens for publishers.⁴⁸

In addition to regulatory restrictions, journalists face challenges in carrying out their work. In June 2024, a journalist covering a far-right rally by the Casa Pound

movement in Turin was attacked.⁴⁹ In August 2024, writer, activist, and teacher Christian Raimo became the target of a hate campaign fuelled by members of the government majority. This was followed by a disciplinary measure in August 2024⁵⁰ for a post in which he criticised the education minister. On 30 September he received a second reprimand for criticising the minister’s actions during a debate at an opposition party meeting.⁵¹

In June 2024, the Brothers of Italy party sued the investigative television programme “Report” and its journalists, claiming compensation of €50,000 for the damage to its image due to an episode on relations between party members and criminal organisations.⁵²

Safe space

In February, the headquarters of the Gay Centre in Rome, a space opened by LGBTQI+ organisations, was vandalised with homophobic slogans and its entrance was damaged.⁵³

On 24 June, a Democratic Party office was defamed with phrases praising fascism and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.⁵⁴

On 7 October, one of the offices of Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL),⁵⁵ a trade union, was targeted and daubed with graffiti linked to the No Vax movement,⁵⁶ which has long been courted by the Brothers of Italy and infiltrated by neo-fascist groups. Earlier in 2021, the union’s national headquarters was attacked during a No Vax demonstration, which led to the arrest of the leaders of the neo-fascist movement Forza Nuova.⁵⁷

⁴⁵. <https://www.magistraturademocratica.it/articolo/zone-rosse-i-soggetti-segnalati-e-le-liberta-costituzionali-di-tutti>

⁴⁶. <https://rsf.org/en/index>

⁴⁷. <https://www.fnsi.it/pubblicata-in-gazzetta-ufficiale-la-legge-con-la-norma-bavaglio-fnsi-porteremo-il-caso-in-europa>

⁴⁸. <https://www.fnsi.it/legge-bavaglio-costante-manganellate-a-giornalisti-ed-editori-con-le-sanzioni-economiche>

⁴⁹. <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2024/07/torino-giornalista-agredito-da-militanti-di-estrema-destra-la-stampa-ci-riguarda-tutti-c006e233-0d27-4b48-a0a0-5b048165629e.html>

⁵⁰. https://www.ansa.it/lazio/notizie/2024/08/25/critico-valditara-provvedimento-disciplinare-contro-raimo_c54360ac-c6a6-4aa8-a1b3-bb519b51b06b.html

⁵¹. https://www.repubblica.it/italia/2024/09/30/news/raimo_provvedimento_disciplinare_valditara-423527592/

⁵². <https://www.rai.it/programmi/report/news/2024/06/Fratelli-d'Italia-ha-presentato-richiesta-risarcimento-danni-in-sede-civile-nei-confronti-dell'inviato-di-Report-Giorgio-Mottola-6346fa32-8e87-4e06-8935-21fa1771910b.html>

⁵³. <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2024/02/01/roma-vandalizzato-lingresso-del-gay-center-a-testaccio-scritte-omofobe-sullasfalto-e-colpi-di-mazza-da-baseball-contro-il-muro-rainbow/7430282/>

⁵⁴. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2024/06/24/imbrattata-una-sede-del-pd-a-milano-scritte-inquietanti_7d6c54dc-cc45-45be-a213-0288d49e-b4e8.html

⁵⁵. <https://www.cgil.it/>

⁵⁶. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2024/10/07/sede-cgil-di-taranto-imbrattata-con-scritte-no-vax_af667f5a-cbbb-4f41-b0ba-43302d5a39ff.html

⁵⁷. https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2021/10/09/news/no_green_pass_no_vax_scontri_a_roma_reazioni-321545789/ ; <https://www.ilriformista.it/forza-nuova-lassalto-di-roma-come-capitol-hill-lobiettivo-era-colpire-palazzo-chigi-e-poi-altre-citta-253390/>

On 10 January, shortly after closing time, a firecracker exploded in front of an Arci club in Turin, damaging the entrance and the shutters.⁵⁸ In October 2024, a defamation lawsuit was brought by ENI, the state-owned hydrocarbon giant, against Greenpeace

and Re-Common in response to a campaign the two organisations have been conducting for years to draw public attention to the responsibility of companies like ENI for climate change and its costs.⁵⁹

Repression of the Palestine solidarity movement

As the violence in Israel and Palestine intensifies, so do the restrictions against those expressing solidarity with Palestine. More recently, student encampments calling for solidarity with Palestine have taken place in cities such as Bologna, Rome, Pisa, Siena, Trento, Venice, Naples, Padua, Milan, Palermo, Brescia, Genoa, Bari, Ravenna, Bergamo, Salerno, Cosenza and Turin, with tents and banners advocating solidarity with Palestine.⁶⁰ These protests, following the global mobilisation known as the “Student Intifada (or uprising)”, have faced massive repression by the government. The demands of the student protestors include ending agreements with Israeli universities and companies, denouncing Israeli military aggression in Gaza, and advocating for a ceasefire.⁶¹

On 23 February, excessive police violence was reported against students in the cities of Florence and Pisa, while student marches were violently blocked by the police.⁶² Numerous protesters remain under investigation.⁶³ According to media reports, the police blocked a peaceful demonstration in Pisa and attacked participants, several of whom were injured and taken away by ambulances.⁶⁴ This prompted the president to reprimand the interior minister⁶⁵ and an led to an investigation by the judiciary into police conduct.⁶⁶

On 19 March, students expressing solidarity with Palestine in Turin disrupted an Academic Senate session, demanding an end to the university's participation in collaborations involving dual-use technologies — technologies used for both civilian and military purposes — with Israel.⁶⁷ After extensive debate, the

senators approved a motion suspending new collaborations with Israel, marking Turin as the first Italian city to take such action. On 13 May, Palestine solidarity groups occupied the Academic Senate, calling for the termination of academic cooperation agreements with Israeli universities and urging the university to prioritise human rights and social justice. At the beginning of May 2024, Palestinian youth established an encampment at the State University of Milan, with banners demanding an “end to the massacre of the Palestinian people” and expressing solidarity with the “Student Intifada.”⁶⁸ On 15 May, after a week of encampment at the Polytechnic University of Milan, students found the doors of the university barred, preventing them from entering the building.⁶⁹

Similar actions have been seen in other Italian cities. In Florence, clashes erupted during a Palestine solidarity march on 28 May, resulting in police searches and investigations of students.⁷⁰ Police searched the apartments of participants, using intimidating tactics against them, while several other participants were severely injured as a result of police violence in Pisa and Florence.⁷¹

On 1 June, a demonstration in Rome organised by the June 1 Committee against the Meloni government, gathered representatives from about 50 trade unions, collectives from La Sapienza University, students, members of the Palestinian diaspora, migrants, and various associations. According to media reports, clashes were reported between police and participants at various points along the march route, and the police used tear gas.⁷²

58. <https://www.rainews.it/tgr/piemonte/articoli/2025/01/vetrine-infrante-serranda-divelta-bomba-carta-davanti-al-circolo-arci-banfo-17b63edb-b05e-48b5-b6fc-337b6017cb34.html>

59. <https://ilmanifesto.it/campagna-dodio-eni-fa-cause-a-greenpeace-italia-e-recommon>

60. <https://lespresso.it/c/politica/2024/5/15/le-tende-per-la-palestina-riempiono-le-universita-italiane-la-nostra-intifada-contro-le-violazioni-dei-dirit-ti-dei-palestinesi/50988>

61. https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/05/13/news/universita_acampade_protesta_israele_palestina-422943037/

62. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/police-beatings-pro-palestinian-schoolchildren-spark-outrage-italy-2024-02-23/>

63. <https://www.firenzetoday.it/cronaca/manifestazione-23-febbraio-firenze-perquisiti-indagati.html>

64. <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2024/02/23/corteo-degli-studenti-pro-palestina-a-pisa-cariche-della-polizia-schierata-in-tenuta-antisommos-sa-video/7456365/>

65. <https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/cortei-a-pisa-mattarella-a-piantedosi-lautorevolezza-delle-forze-dellordine-non-si-misura-sui-manganelli/>

66. <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2024/02/manganellate-agli-studenti-a-pisa-focus-dellinchiesta-sulla-catena-di-coman-do-9a4f90ee-33b7-43db-a8c1-00a57ecaf600.html>

67. https://www.lastampa.it/torino/2024/05/30/news/universita_occupata_ragioni_storia_prospettive_protesta_pro-palestina-14346735/

68. <https://www.lapresse.it/cronaca/2024/05/10/milano-gli-studenti-pro-palestina-allestiscono-un-accampamento-alla-statale/>

69. <https://lespresso.it/c/politica/2024/5/15/le-tende-per-la-palestina-riempiono-le-universita-italiane-la-nostra-intifada-contro-le-violazioni-dei-dirit-ti-dei-palestinesi/50988>

70. <https://www.lindipendente.online/2024/05/29/firenze-perquisite-le-case-dei-manifestanti-pro-palestina-mentre-non-si-arrestano-le-proteste/>

71. <https://www.lindipendente.online/2024/05/29/firenze-perquisite-le-case-dei-manifestanti-pro-palestina-mentre-non-si-arrestano-le-proteste/>

72. <https://www.romatoday.it/cronaca/corteo-roma-1-giugno.html>

On 4 June, the month-long protest at La Sapienza University, which had commenced on 6 May, concluded.⁷³ The decision was taken shortly after the clashes with the police in the demonstration on 1 June, in which collectives from the university participated. The collectives explained their decision to end the tent encampment, stating that they will continue protesting through other forms of mobilisation.

In Tuscany, police reportedly searched the apartments of those who participated in a solidarity march outside the US consulate.⁷⁴ SUDD Cobas, a worker's union that participated in the protest, reported that it faced serious intimidation from the Florentine police. According to the union, the search operations of the homes of the union coordinator and other union members began at 6 in the morning.⁷⁵

Karem Rohana, an Italian-Palestinian activist, has been the target of months-long pressure and attacks from Italian politicians and journalists due to his critical stance on media coverage of Palestine and his activity on social media in defending the rights of the Palestinian people.

Repression of the climate justice movement

The climate justice movement was significantly targeted throughout the year. On 9 July, during a demonstration in Bologna, Extinction Rebellion activists chained themselves to the entrance of the Palazzo d'Accursio and others tried to unfurl a banner on the Clock Tower. An activist – who was taking part in the protest, but not engaged in the direct action — reported police abuse. After being detained, photographed and fingerprinted, she was allegedly forced to undress and bend over in unsanitary conditions at the police headquarters in Bologna.⁷⁹

On 3 May, in the early morning, the homes of five Ultima Generazione activists were searched following an investigation into an unsuccessful attempt to display a banner during an exhibition.⁸⁰ On 23 May, during a

On 6 March, Rohana was arrested by the municipal police at home, as he reported on his Instagram account,⁷⁶ following an interaction with the mayor of Florence, Dario Nardella, in Piazza della Signoria the same morning. Previously, the mayor had ordered the police to issue a warning against Rohana for stalking.

Carlotta Vagnoli, a Florentine author commented that stalking and persecutory acts are configured in very specific cases in which the freedom, safety and life of the complainant would be at risk, which is undoubtedly absent here.”⁷⁷

In October, the University of Seine cancelled a debate on Palestine at which Rohana, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé and the UN Special Rapporteur for the Palestinian Occupied Territories Francesca Albanese were meant to speak.⁷⁸

demonstration by Ultima Generazione at the labour ministry, activists were detained and charged for daubing charcoal on the building's entrance.⁸¹ Three journalists were also detained for over three hours without having access to the telephone.⁸² In August, Ultima Generazione activist Giacomo Baggio was notified of a special surveillance order, which included a ban on leaving the house from 20:00 to 07:00 and a ban on taking part in any public demonstrations, with the obligation to sign the order. This measure is applied to individuals considered “socially dangerous”. The measure was applied in response to the activist's participation in non-violent protests of Ultima Generazione, where the group disrupted a tennis court during the international tennis tournament in Rome.⁸³

⁷³. <https://www.romatoday.it/attualita/sapienza-finita-occupazione-tende-palestina-studenti.html>

⁷⁴. <https://www.lindipendente.online/2024/05/29/firenze-perquisite-le-case-dei-manifestanti-pro-palestina-mentre-non-si-arrestano-le-proteste/>

⁷⁵. <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=963685855548490&set=a.469003151683432>

⁷⁶. https://www.instagram.com/p/C4N5aYBCPaA/?img_index=1

⁷⁷. <https://civicspacewatch.eu/italy-alert-concerning-civic-space-repressions/>

⁷⁸. <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2024/09/24/alluniversita-di-siena-stop-al-dibattito-con-francesca-albanese-e-ilan-pappe-il-rettore-non-il-7-ottobre-gli-studenti-censura/7704399/>

⁷⁹. <https://www.open.online/2024/07/27/bologna-attivista-extinction-rebellion-denuncia-abusi-questura/>

⁸⁰. <https://www.rainews.it/tgr/veneto/articoli/2024/05/padova-perquisite-le-abitazioni-di-alcuni-militanti-di-ultima-generazione-03b368e9-61c2-45ac-a407-d05c8e79f877.html>

⁸¹. https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/05/23/news/ultima_generazione_ministero_lavoro-423090814/

⁸². https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/05/23/news/giornalisti_fermati_polizia_protesta_ultima_generazione_roma-423092878/

⁸³. <https://www.editorialedomani.it/fatti/giacomo-baggio-ultima-generazione-attivista-rischia-sorveglianza-speciale-tribunale-t3y9j6mq>

Financial viability and sustainability of civil society

No measures directly aimed at defunding CSOs have been implemented in 2024. However, a regulatory intervention, currently under discussion, aims to eliminate the VAT exclusion regime for non-profit associations, effectively placing them on the same footing as for-profit companies. This reform, which was scheduled to come into force as of 1 January 2025, has been postponed by one year as requested by all the organisations of the Italian not-for-profit sector.⁸⁴

Unless amended, the proposed regulation will entail several new obligations, many of which are still not entirely clear. This step risks imposing significant financial and bureaucratic burdens on non-profit associations, undermining the sustainability of the associative life which is based, above all, on the voluntary work of members, and risks being a serious violation of the freedom of association.⁸⁵

Civil dialogue and the right to participation

Regarding civil dialogue, there are no substantial developments even though the general context is characterised by a hostile climate on the part of the government in its dialogue with social partners. Particularly in the area of labour relations, the trade unions have repeatedly complained that they were not consulted on strategic decisions concerning the labour market, often being presented with decisions that had already been taken without any form of consultation.⁸⁶ In one example, there was a bitter clash between the government and the trade unions that called for a general strike against

the budget law. This reached the courts after the labour minister and deputy prime minister attempted to limit the strike in the transport sector.⁸⁷

Moreover, none of the regulations that have significantly affected civil society participation and constitutional freedoms have ever been discussed or shared with CSOs. On a positive note, the government and the Third Sector Forum initiated a round table on the application of the VAT regime.

Civil society resilience

Italian civil society in recent years has resisted the constant attacks mainly by using constitutional and legal mechanisms. By appealing against all sanctions received under unconstitutional laws, civil society has not only succeeded in winning all trials but has essentially rendered many of the enacted rules unenforceable. There are several examples demonstrating this.

In September, the organisations SOS Mediterranee and ASGI requested and obtained a court order that the decree against NGOs must be brought before the Constitutional Court to verify its compatibility with constitutional norms.⁸⁸

In September, associations representing second-generation Italian children, together with a large coalition of CSOs, promoted a referendum to reform the current citizenship laws, bringing back the five year minimum period of residence in the country

⁸⁴. <https://www.cantiereterzosettore.it/nel-dl-milleproroghe-il-rinvio-del-nuovo-regime-iva-al-1-gennaio-2026/>

⁸⁵. <https://www.vita.it/iva-al-terzo-settore-la-proposta-per-uscire-dallimpasse-ce-il-governo-che-fa/>

⁸⁶. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/economia/2024/12/01/cgil-e-uil-chiamano-meloni-non-ignori-500mila-persone-_7ae0a46f-903f-4135-b617-7efc36d-5f6a7.html ; <https://www.terzogiornale.it/2024/09/12/il-governo-meloni-chiude-le-porte-ai-sindacati/>

⁸⁷. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/economia/2024/12/10/salvini-precetta-i-sindacati-e-scontro-sullo-sciopero_d9ab35e0-bb09-426e-9ae0-b25e9c2ca5cd.html

⁸⁸. https://bari.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/10/10/news/presunta-incostituzionalita-del-decreto-piantedosi-sul-fermo-delle-ong-tribunale-di-brindisi-in-via-gli-atti-alla-consulta-423547964/#google_vignette

for obtaining citizenship, as it was before 1992. The initiative reached the 500,000 signature target within a few days, sparking an important national debate on

the rights of foreign citizens and in particular of minors who were born and grew up in Italy and who cannot have access to citizenship unless their parents obtain it.

Recommendations

TARGETED RECOMMENDATION:

➔ **Remove obstacles affecting civil society organisations and foster a safe and enabling civic space, particularly the NGO decree, Flows Decree and DDL 160 by repealing them.**

➔ Immediately repeal the so-called “eco-vandals” legislation.

➔ Respect the freedom of peaceful assembly as per international human rights standards and refrain from targeting the climate justice and Palestine solidarity movement.

➔ Urgently scrap the regulatory intervention which aims to eliminate the VAT exclusion regime for non-profit associations and engage in a structured dialogue with civil society on the matter.

CIVIC SPACE REPORT 2025



About European Civic Forum

European Civic Forum (ECF) is a pan-European network of nearly 100 associations and NGOs across 29 European countries. Founded in 2005 by our member organisations, we have spent nearly two decades working to protect civic space, enable civic participation and build civil dialogue for more equality, solidarity and democracy in Europe.

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About Civic Space Watch

CivicSpace Watch is an online platform that gathers data and reports on developments in civic space at the national and EU level and analyses national and European trends in civic space. Powered by the European Civic Forum, it collects findings through regular contact and interviews with a strong network of members and partners on the ground, as well as ongoing media and social media monitoring.

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