

Statement: ILGA-Europe calls on Italian government to end anti-LGBTI rhetoric and violence

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ILGA-Europe stands in solidarity with Italian LGBTI people who continue to face increased hatred and violence and calls on the Italian government to stop feeding a growing divide in Italian society

Over the last weeks, Italy has seen a new surge of LGBTI-phobic violence. There have been no less than four hate-motivated attacks on LGBTI people in the last four weeks, prompting a large manifestation tomorrow in Milan demanding the government take action.

According to the ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map, Italy still lacks crucial legal protection for LGBTI people, such as comprehensive hate crime and hate speech laws that would protect LGBTI people, as well as other minorities, from hatred and violence. This legislative gap is even more worrying at a time when violence against LGBTI people in Italy is alarmingly on the rise, exacerbated by the use of openly LGBTI-phobic rhetoric by some politicians. The persistent "witch hunt" against so-called "gender ideology" has created a fertile ground for justifying and amplifying LGBTI-phobic hatred within society. Such narratives not only perpetuate discrimination but also embolden those who act on their prejudices, further endangering the lives and well-being of LGBTI people.

In addition to the increased frequency and severity of LGBTI-phobic attacks (one of the attacks on New Year's Eve, perpetrated by ten assailants on a gay couple who were holding hands, resulted in serious injuries to the couple – including a head injury and broken nose), the Cassero LGBTQIA+ Centre was vandalised with threatening messages which read: "Free space from faggots". This targeting of an LGBTI organisation is evidence of the more systemic nature of the issue – those who would want to commit LGBTI-phobic violence have been emboldened by the rhetoric and actions of the ruling parties. A legislative project, the so-called 'Zan' law, was voted down in 2021. The law would have designated violence against LGBTI people and disabled people, as well as misogyny, a hate crime. Giorgia Meloni's party voted against the law and publicly celebrated its defeat.

In light of these troubling developments, we urgently call on political leaders to initiate a meaningful process to establish legal protections for LGBTI individuals in Italy. Most pressingly, we demand that politicians, particularly influential figures within the government—such as Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Minister Eugenia Roccella—publicly and unequivocally condemn the growing wave of LGBTI-phobic violence.

Regardless of political considerations, it is the bare minimum for a government that claims to uphold democratic values to take a firm and unwavering stance against violence, especially when it targets minorities. Accepting any form of violence as "the new normal" is incompatible within a society that aspires to equality, dignity, and justice for all.

We urge immediate action to ensure that Italy will return to being a safer, more inclusive country where everyone is protected and valued, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics.