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زبانهای اروپایی

FEBRUARY 13, 2018

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14.02.2018

Italy's New Fascism



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Fascism is still alive and kicking in Italy. On February 3, 28-year-old Luca Traini entered the center of the town of Macerata with his car, shooting tens of bullets and wounding several migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. After the shooting, the man, wrapped in the Italian flag, made the fascist salute [when he was arrested](#).

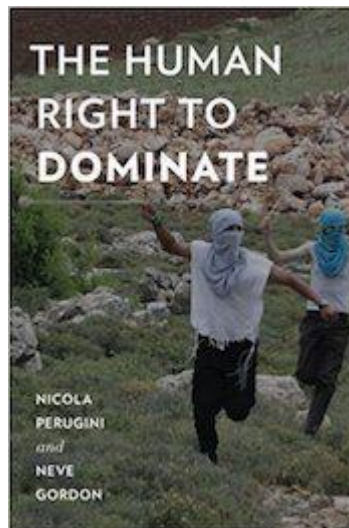
The attack took place days after the arrest of a Nigerian man in relation to the death of the teenager Pamela Mastropietro, [“whose dismembered body was discovered hidden in two](#)

[suitcases near Macerata.](#)” According to the [investigating judge](#), the Nigerian man was part of the crime but did not kill the young woman. When interrogated by the investigators about the shooting, Traini claimed that his act was a revenge for the killing of Pamela Mastropietro.

Traini’s racist drive-by attack should be understood as part of a worrying trend of systematic neofascist physical assaults—some of which lethal—against migrants. Given the rise in these attacks in the recent years, the Bologna based anti-fascist collective Infoantifa Ecn has recently released an interactive map that documents [more than 140 neofascist](#) aggressions since 2014. As correctly pointed out by journalist Annalisa Camilli, fascism is (again) a [national emergency](#) in Italy.

Mainstream right-wing parties reacted to the Macerata shooting with different degrees of ambiguity. Silvio Berlusconi, the candidate for the centre-right coalition at the forthcoming March 2018 national elections, tried to depoliticize the armed aggression and defined it as the act of a “mentally unstable” man with no racist or fascist motive. In addition, he tried to instrumentalize the shooting and argued that migrants are a “[social bomb](#),” promising the expulsion of 600.000 of them in case he will be elected.

Along similar lines, Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Northern League, the party for which the shooter was a candidate at the 2017 local elections in the province of Macerata, [claimed](#) that



“uncontrolled migrations will lead [Italy] to social war. Building on Berlusconi’s and Salvini’s comments, other candidates of the centre-right coalition blamed the shooting on the centre-left coalition and their “benevolent” migration policies during the recent years, while the Five Star Movement’s candidate remained silent and did not release any official statement on the attack.

On the left, the Democratic Party's Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni stated that "[hate and violence will not divide us](#)" and that "criminal acts cannot have an ideological component." The Democratic Party's candidate for the March 2018 elections, Matteo Renzi, defined Luca Traini as a "[crazy man](#)" and invited his colleagues not to instrumentalize the shooting. While the PM and Renzi, not unlike Berlusconi, downplayed the ideological component of the shooting, ex-President of the Chamber of Deputies and candidate with the Liberi e Uguali [Free and Equals] Party, Laura Boldrini, defined the shooting a "[terrorist attack](#)" carried out by an "armed fascist," and rebuked the Northern League for "teaching hate."

Underscoring that the Macerata attack is part of an alarming chain of neofascist aggressions, the newly created leftist party Potere al Popolo [Power to the People] [asked](#) the Democratic Party's Minister of Interior Marco Minniti to shut down all the political organizations inspired by fascism. However, Minniti does not seem to be ready to take such a "radical" decision—which actually would merely apply the Italian Constitution and its prohibition of the "promotion of any association that pursues the aims of the Fascist party or anyone who exalts its principles."

Instead, the Minister of the Interior and his centre-left government are proud supporters of the hard line against migrants. Last year, the Minister [threatened](#) to close the Italian ports to migrants arriving from the South of the Mediterranean and promoted a revision of the EU asylum policies. Instead of shutting down fascist organizations, Minniti and some of his governmental allies seem more busy trying to shut down ports—an open violation of international law and the principle of non-refoulement, since many refugees dock in Italy—, [striking deals](#) with Libyan smuggling gangs, and [preventing](#) NGOs that rescue migrant boats in the Mediterranean from doing their job.

Few days after the Macerata shooting, Minniti proudly [claimed](#) that he is trying to stop migrants from entering Italy because he "forecasted Traini [’s drive-by attack]." His statement aligns with the dominant racist discourse in Italy, and is a perfect picture of why the country is facing again a fascist national emergency.

Anti-migrant sentiments are fueled transversally across the whole parliamentary arch, with very few exceptions. Mainstream left-wing forces like the Democratic Party are complicit with right-wing parties in creating this political environment of fear against migrants in which neofascist violence is growing.

The new fascism is neither a marginal phenomenon, nor a question of a bunch of “mentally unstable” and “crazy men.” Instead, it is a plague proliferating also within Italy’s democratic institutions, like the fascism of old.

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