

This demonstration has been called by the Anarchist Federation and No Borders in solidarity with Gypsy & Roma people in Italy. They are currently facing the worst persecution since the Fascist era of the 1930s and 40s. We wish to confront the representatives of the Italian state, which is behind this attack.

Government misinformation

The state is encouraging Italians to view Roma as illegal immigrants, as part of a generalised right-wing response to migration into Italy from other EU countries. Anarchists and No Borders activists believe anyone should be able to settle wherever they want, but nonetheless this is deliberate misinformation by the Italian government. Roma are not recent arrivals. Many have been settled in Italy for 40 years and are Italian citizens. Those who have recently arrived have done so as part of the wider process of perfectly legal and natural economic migration within the EU. Some wish to travel, others wish to settle. They should have the same legal protection as other EU citizens.

STOP Government ATTACKS on ROMA people in Italy!

Attacks on Roma camps

Instead, state mis-information has fuelled right-wing attacks on traveller camps. The attacks have been increasing since the election of Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia party in April 2008 and his appointment of Roberto Maroni, leader of the neo-fascist Northern League party, as his Minister of the Interior. On 11 May Maroni remarked that 'all Roma camps will have to be dismantled right away, and the inhabitants will be either expelled or imprisoned'. Two days later a camp in Naples was set on fire by a gang of 60 racists. In northern regions in particular, pogroms led to the destruction of Roma camps by fire on at least 8 occasions. Not only has this not been condemned by local politicians, it has been encouraged. Umberto Bossi of the Northern League remarked, 'People do what the state can't manage.'

Racist discrimination

As well as the attacks on camps, misplaced social prejudice that all travellers are criminals is being used to justify frightening new legal measures. Gianfranco Fini, leader of the neo-fascist National Alliance party, remarked in 2007 that Roma considered theft to be 'virtually legitimate and not immoral'. He also said that Roma men supported themselves through the prostitution of their wives and by forcing their children to beg.

An extraordinary number of new powers have been granted to national and local government to help deal with the Roma 'problem', as it is called in the alarmist legislation. They resemble powers usually reserved for national emergencies in Italy. They allow the taking and storing of information on the identity of each

person in traveller camps, for example photographs and fingerprints. The intention to fingerprint all Roma children systematically, for their 'safety', was also announced. This legislation has an explicitly racial basis and breaches various international guidelines. It is to allow the authorities to identify and monitor Roma, as Italy's new Commissioner for Roma, Carlo Mosca put it in June this year.

This attitude has become so 'normal' that even the Red Cross are helping the state gather data that it has no right to collect from Roma. Recently it allowed the racist Flavio Tosi to avoid conviction for racial discrimination. He won an appeal to the highest Italian court because, as the court put it, 'all Gypsies *are* thieves'. Tosi has since become mayor of Verona. In contrast, Roma are routinely beaten by police and accused arrested for crimes without evidence. They are convicted in the public mind whatever the outcome in court.

Indifference

In this sort of atmosphere an incident took place that shocked Europe. When two Roma girls drowned on an Italian beach, holidaymakers continued sunbathing and picnicking as though nothing significant had taken place. This was next to the children's corpses, merely covered by a blanket, over which a third girl was weeping. So much for 'protecting' Roma children.

Not all Italians are so indifferent of course, and many place the blame where it lies, with the state, far-right and media. Activists including anarchists are supporting Roma in practical ways in resisting this process, and are organising demos like this to shame the state.

But it's not only Roma in Italy who face persecution and indifference. Organised attacks by both states and vigilante groups take place all over Europe.

For example, in the 1990s 100,000 Roma were displaced from Kosova. Many of them still live in poverty in Serbia. See Balkan Refugee Voice:

<http://freedomfight.net>

Roma and all travellers face discrimination and persecution here too. Travellers in Essex are fighting eviction from land they own by Basildon council, who say they do not have proper planning permission. Contact them at **dale.farm@btinternet.com** to support their resistance.

Please help spread information about this situation and take action yourself.

See these websites:

www.afed.org.uk

www.nobordersmanchester.org.uk

www.noborderslondon.blogspot.com

www.nobordersnottingham.org.uk

<http://federazioneanarchica.org>