

The State of the World's Human Rights; Italy 2025

Torture and other ill-treatment

Detainees endured overcrowded conditions in substandard establishments. The number of deaths in custody remained high.

In migrant repatriation centres, people continued to be held in bare cells without access to meaningful activities. In July, the Constitutional Court found that the detention of migrants violated constitutional principles, citing parliament's persistent failure to establish regulatory frameworks.

An investigation into the torture and other ill-treatment of 33 boys at a juvenile prison in the city of Milan between 2021 and 2024 continued. In August, it emerged that 42 people were being investigated, including directors and medical staff.

In June, the European Court of Human Rights held that Italy had violated the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment in a 2001 case of ill-treatment in police custody, and that the investigation had been inadequate. Although 31 officials were charged, many prosecutions were discontinued as the statute of limitation had expired.

Violence against women and girls

Levels of violence against women remained high. By year's end, 85 women had been killed in domestic violence incidents, including 62 women killed by their partners or former partners. In November, parliament failed to pass a bill that would have introduced a consent-based definition of rape.

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Legislation passed in June introduced new offences and harsher penalties to disproportionately restrict civil disobedience and protests, including "passive resistance" in prisons and migration detention centres.¹ UN special rapporteurs criticized the government's decision to circumvent parliamentary procedures to avoid scrutiny of provisions not aligned with international law.

Concerns persisted about the use by police of excessive and unnecessary force against peaceful protesters. The authorities continued to misuse administrative restrictions of the right to freedom of movement to punish peaceful protesters. In October, in Udine, several peaceful protesters who had demonstrated against the genocide in Gaza were banned from entering the city for lengthy periods.

Freedom of expression

Journalists continued to face intimidation, threats and attacks. In October, a bomb exploded under the car of a journalist but caused no injuries. An investigation was ongoing at year's end.

Vexatious lawsuits against journalists by public officials and politicians, including for alleged defamation, remained a concern. Defamation remained a criminal offence.

Paragon's Graphite spyware was unlawfully used to spy on human rights defenders and at least two journalists. In June, a parliamentary committee confirmed that Italy's intelligence services used it to spy on activists, alleging national security grounds. However, the government failed to respond to credible allegations that journalists were also unlawfully spied on.

Sexual and reproductive rights

The authorities continued to fail to guarantee access to lawful abortion services, against a backdrop of high numbers of health professionals refusing to provide such services.²

Refugees' and migrants' rights

At least 1,195 people died at sea along the central Mediterranean route while trying to reach Italy. Several shipwrecks occurred just outside Italian territorial waters. Rescue NGOs criticized the Italian authorities' delayed response to their alerts about boats in distress, which placed people's lives at risk.

In July, six customs police and coastguard officers were indicted for failing to prevent a shipwreck near Steccato di Cutro, Calabria, in February 2023, when at least 94 people, mostly from Afghanistan, drowned in Italian waters.

In March, the Cassation Court ruled that the government should compensate those rescued at sea and unlawfully held aboard the Italian coastguard ship *Diciotti* for 10 days in 2018, after the then minister of the interior blocked their disembarkation in Sicily.

The government continued to obstruct efforts by human rights defenders to rescue people at sea. It assigned distant ports of disembarkation to NGO ships as well as seizing NGO ships and aircrafts, thus increasing the risk of people drowning while trying to reach Italy.

In October, six members of the NGO Mediterranean Saving Humans went on trial in Ragusa, Sicily. They were charged with aggravated facilitation of irregular migration for transferring 27 shipwreck survivors on board their ship and then disembarking them in Sicily in 2020. The survivors, who included one child and a pregnant woman, had been rescued by a Danish oil tanker, under instructions from Maltese authorities, which then denied them disembarkation for nearly six weeks.

Cooperation with Albania

In March, Italy expanded the use of its migration detention centres in Albania to include holding people served with an expulsion order who were already in migration detention in Italy. The original purpose of the centres in Albania – detaining asylum seekers intercepted in international waters and presumed to come from countries designated as “safe” by Italy – continued to be challenged in the courts. In August, the EU Court of Justice ruled that competent courts must be able to judicially review the application of the “safe country of origin” concept, thereby undermining Italy’s legal framework for processing such claims.

Also in August, a court in Rome ordered the urgent release of a man detained in Albania as the arrangements in place there did not guarantee the right to health.

Some Egyptian nationals were forcibly repatriated to Egypt from Albania by Italian officials, without that process being provided for in Italy’s agreement with Albania or in other legislation.

Following monitoring visits, lawyers, members of parliament and ombudspersons from the Lazio region and Rome criticized the inadequate access of detainees at the centres in Albania to healthcare, legal assistance and other rights. The Ministry of Interior denied Amnesty International access to the centres, alleging “public order and safety reasons”.

Cooperation with Libya

Italy continued to support Libyan authorities in preventing people from reaching Europe, including by renewing the Memorandum of Understanding with Libya in November. This was despite evidence of widespread, serious human rights violations against refugees and migrants in Libya and of the persistent failure of Libyan authorities to guarantee search-and-rescue operations in line with international law.

In two incidents in August and September, the Libyan coastguard opened fire on NGO rescue ships in international waters, endangering the lives of crew members and rescued people. The attacks were carried out from ships transferred by Italy to Libya under EU-funded programmes.

Cooperation with Tunisia

Italy also continued to cooperate with Tunisia to intercept and disembark refugees and migrants there, despite evidence that they would be at risk of human rights violations.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

In January, Italy failed to surrender to the ICC Osama Elmasry Njeem, a Libyan official accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Although Italian police arrested him pursuant to an ICC arrest warrant, he was then released, and returned to Libya by Italy. In October, the ICC found Italy non-compliant with its obligations under the Rome Statute but deferred a decision on further action.

The UN Human Rights Council criticized Italy for failing to establish a national human rights institution, despite past commitments to do so.³

Economic, social and cultural rights

In October, the National Institute of Statistics reported that 5.7 million people were living in absolute poverty in 2024. More than 30% of families with at least one foreign national member fell into this category.

Right to a healthy environment

In September, UK-based scientists announced that climate change had caused 4,597 heat-related deaths in Italy between June and August.

Italy fell three places to 46th in the global Climate Change Performance Index, because its National Energy and Climate Plan lacked ambition and was “inconsistent with Italy’s EU and Paris Agreement commitments”.

Irresponsible arms transfers

Italy continued to transfer arms to Israel under licences issued before 7 October 2023. It also failed to prevent transfers coming from other countries – where the ultimate destination was reported to be Israel – from transiting through Italy, including a shipment of explosives that departed from the port of Ravenna in June.

