

World Report 2025 - Italy

Italy's coalition government led by a hard-right nationalist party pursued offshore processing of asylum applications, outsourced repressive migration controls by countries with problematic human rights records, and obstructed humanitarian rescues at sea. Parliament approved a law criminalizing seeking surrogacy abroad, and harmful policies and rhetoric about the reproductive rights of women and girls and about LGBT people contributed to a hostile environment. Interference with media freedom and constraints on civil society raised concerns about respect for the rule of law.

Migrants and Asylum Seekers

Around 55,000 people, including more than 6,350 unaccompanied children, [reached Italy by sea](#) in the first ten months of 2024, less than half the number that arrived during the same period in 2023. Overall statistics showed a [significant increase](#) in use of other routes. Following a July visit to Lampedusa, an Italian island which receives many migrants by sea, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) urged greater support for migrants with vulnerabilities and called for new identification procedures in line with children's rights.

The government obstructed nongovernmental rescue organizations, detaining rescue ships at least 25 times between February 2023 and September 2024. As of October, [authorities have the power to fine and detain NGO aircraft](#). In August 2024, [UN experts](#) reiterated concerns about Italy's "distant port policy" which obliges rescue ships to disembark in ports in central and northern Italy rather than in Sicily and about the [recurring administrative detention of rescue ships](#). In September, [prosecutors sought a 6-year sentence](#) for Matteo Salvini for refusing as interior minister to allow migrants to disembark from an NGO rescue ship in 2019.

Seven years after authorities seized the *Iuventa* search-and-rescue ship and leveled charges of facilitating unauthorized immigration against three NGOs and a shipping company, a [court in Trapani](#) in April acquitted 21 defendants due to lack of evidence.

Calling into question Italy's efforts to outsource migration control to Libya, Italian courts ruled that captains of merchant vessels should not return people they rescue at sea to Libya due to risk of serious human rights violations. In February, the Court of Cassation, the highest criminal court, upheld the conviction of the captain of a supply ship for the return to Libya of 101 people in 2018. In June, a civil court in Rome ruled that another commercial ship captain as well as Italian authorities had wrongfully returned 150 people to Libya in July 2018 and ordered financial compensation to the victims who brought the case. Also in June, a court in Crotone concluded that the Libyan maritime rescue coordination center and the Libyan Coast Guard are not legitimate search and rescue actors.

In April, [Italy agreed with Tunisia](#) a package of financial support and credit lines worth €105 million which Prime Minister Meloni described as part of Italy's plan to deepen economic ties and curb migration. Italy also agreed to [grant visas to 12,000 skilled Tunisians](#).

Italy's deal with Albania to offshore the processing of adult male asylum seekers intercepted or rescued at sea by Italian vessels ran into difficulty in October and November when Italian [judges ruled unlawful](#) the detention of two groups of men rescued at sea by Italy and sent to Albania. The court called into question the designation of the men's countries as "safe" countries of origin that serves as the basis for the accelerated processing of claimants in Albania. As a result, both groups of men—the first to be taken to Albania under the deal—were transferred to Italy.

By May, 216 people had been resettled out of Libya to Italy under a [program](#) agreed between UNHCR, civil society groups, and the Italian government in December 2023. Italy has committed

to evacuate or resettle 1,500 people from Libya by 2026.

Discrimination and Intolerance

Following an 8-day visit to Italy in May, the [UN Independent Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in the Context of Law Enforcement](#) expressed concerns about racial profiling by the police, disproportionate incarceration of Africans and people of African descent, and the lack of comprehensive race-based data among other issues signaling systemic racism. In October, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance [recommended](#) steps to counter racism within law enforcement and persistent prejudice against Roma in housing and education.

A criminal law amendment allowing the incarceration of pregnant women and those with children under one year of age was dubbed the “anti-Roma” measure after Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini [repeatedly asserted](#) that Roma women who commit crimes evade prison by remaining pregnant.

In September, the [lower house of parliament voted against](#) law reforms to grant citizenship following 10 years of schooling in Italy. [Under current law](#), these children, including those born in Italy, can access citizenship only once they turn 18 and meet certain requirements.

Poverty and Inequality

According to data published by the [national statistical institute ISTAT](#) in 2024, almost 10 percent of the Italian population lived in poverty in 2023, on par with the previous year. In July, [the EU Court of Justice](#) ruled that Italy’s 10-year residency requirement for foreign nationals to access the “citizen’s income” social security scheme, which provided income support to those with low incomes, constituted unlawful discrimination. The government had already replaced that scheme in January with a new system of “inclusion checks” and vocational training that provides [more limited assistance](#) than Italian citizens receive and requires five years’ residency.

[Oxfam reported](#) data indicating that the richest 20 percent in Italy held two-thirds of the nation’s wealth, while the poorest 60 percent held just 13.5 percent.

Women’s Rights

Sexual and gender-based violence remains a serious concern. [Government statistics published in July](#) showed a steady increase from 2021 to 2023 in cases of domestic violence against women, sexual assault, and other acts of gender-based violence and harassment. A [law enacted in December 2023](#) accelerated the processing of domestic violence cases, gave police and prosecutors additional tools to counter domestic violence and stalking and increased punishments for violating protection orders.

In April, parliament passed a government-sponsored measure to facilitate access by anti-abortion groups to family counseling centers where many pregnant people go seeking advice and access to abortion. Abortion is legal in Italy within the first trimester, and later in some circumstances, but people often face significant obstacles due to high numbers of healthcare professionals who invoke conscientious objection and refuse to participate in the procedure.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

[Italy dropped from 34th to 36th place](#) out of 49 European countries in ILGA Europe’s assessment of policies and laws protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. ILGA Europe

pointed to hate speech by prominent politicians, attacks on same-sex parent families, and inadequate state response to violence and discrimination targeting LGBT people. In a [survey by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency](#) 60 percent of respondents in Italy said anti-LGBT violence had increased in the last five years and 68 percent said they had experienced bullying, insults, or threats at school.

In October the [Senate approved a bill](#) that criminalizes having a child via surrogacy abroad (a practice already illegal in Italy), punishable by up to two years in prison and up to a €1 million fine. The measure will have a disproportionate impact on same-sex and infertile couples' right to create a family.

Rule of Law

In July, an [alliance of media freedom organizations](#) said lack of media independence and use of legal intimidation against journalists in Italy was “alarming.” In its yearly rule of law report issued in July, the European Commission also highlighted an increase in lawsuits targeting journalists. The [European Commission noted](#) excessive government use of emergency decrees and shrinking civic space.

The lower house of parliament approved in September a security bill critics say violates freedom of expression and assembly. In addition to creating new offenses, including non-violent protest in prisons or immigration detention centers, the bill increases punishments for certain offenses committed during protests.