

2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Italy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Italy during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists; and crimes, violence, or threats of violence motivated by antisemitism.

The government took credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1.

Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were no reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Section 2.

Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, and the government generally respected this right. An independent media, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for media members.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

In July, members of informal political movement Casa Pound assaulted *La Stampa* journalist Andrea Joly, who was filming their gathering. The National Association of Journalists urged

authorities to investigate the incident, identify those responsible, and establish an observatory body regarding threatened journalists. Police took four members of the group into custody on August 22; the case was pending trial at year's end.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for workers to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibited antiunion discrimination. Legal restrictions did not limit freedom of association or collective bargaining.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers. Penalties for violations of freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike were commensurate with those for analogous violations such as civil rights violations and penalties were regularly applied against violators.

There were instances in which employers unilaterally annulled bargaining agreements or used short-term contracts and subcontracting to avoid hiring workers with bargaining rights.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law did not provide for a minimum wage. Instead, collective bargaining contracts negotiated between unions and employers set minimum wage levels for different sectors of the economy. Unless limited by a collective bargaining agreement, the law provided for a workweek of 40 hours. Alleged violations of wage, hour, or overtime laws were more common in agricultural, luxury goods, and service sectors.

Occupational Safety and Health

Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were generally appropriate for the main industries in the country. The government proactively identified unsafe conditions. In general, if documentation was provided, workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardy to their employment.

Alleged violations of OSH standards were more common in the agricultural and service sectors. Multiple luxury good companies were placed under court administration after government inspections found cases of subcontractors violating health, safety, wage, and working hour standards.

Workers in the agricultural sector sometimes faced unsafe work conditions. In a widely reported case, in June an Indian farmworker died after his arm was severed by heavy machinery and he was allegedly left on the side of the road. The government arrested the owner of the agricultural company on allegations of criminal negligence and manslaughter. National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL) data revealed that reported fatal work-related accidents in the

first eight months of the year were up 3.5 percent over the corresponding period from the prior year. Reported accidents in the first seven months of the year were up 0.9 percent.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

In general, the government effectively enforced minimum wages as set by collective labor contracts, overtime, and OSH laws. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policies was responsible for enforcement of wage, hour, and OSH laws. Labor inspections were jointly conducted by representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, the National Institute for Social Security, INAIL, and the Carabinieri. Penalties for violations were commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence, and were regularly applied against violators.

The number of labor inspectors was sufficient to enforce compliance, and inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. The government acted to prevent violations, particularly against vulnerable groups, by conducting random inspections, investigating alleged violations, and conducting public awareness campaigns.

The estimated size of the informal sector was 10.5 percent of GDP according to the country's national statistics agency in 2022. *World Economics* estimated the country's informal economy to be as high as 24 percent of GDP. Informal-sector workers were covered by wage, hour, OSH, and other labor laws, and the government provided social protections for informal economy workers. Due to the nature of the informal economy, however, the government was limited in its enforcement of laws and provision of protections, especially in the agricultural, construction, and service sectors.

The agricultural sector had the highest level of informality, with workers often lacking regular contracts, rendering them more susceptible to wage and work-condition exploitation.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were no reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The constitution prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3.

Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibited such practices. Prosecutors filed criminal charges against prison authorities alleged to have engaged in torture or illegal treatment or punishment.

On April 22, authorities arrested 13 Milan penitentiary agents and suspended another eight accused of abuse of children, torture, aggravated assault, ideological falsehood, and attempted sexual violence. Prosecutors gathered evidence of repeated acts of violence against detained children since 2022.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

There was no significant presence of the worst forms of child labor. The law prohibited all the worst forms of child labor and provided for a minimum age for employment, occupational safety mandates, health safeguards, and limitations on working hours for children. The minimum age for employment was 16 and applied to children working in all sectors. The government effectively enforced applicable laws in the formal economy, but enforcement was not as effective in the informal sector. Penalties were commensurate with those for analogous crimes, and violations were regularly applied against violators.

Child Marriage

The minimum age for marriage was 18, but juvenile courts could authorize marriages for individuals as young as 16. Forced marriage was punishable by up to five years in prison, or six years if it involved a child. Forced marriage for religious reasons was also penalized. Authorities effectively enforced the law.

c. Protection to Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had a system for providing protection to refugees.

Nongovernmental organizations and independent observers identified difficulties in asylum procedures, including inconsistencies in the application of standards in reception centers and insufficient referral rates of trafficking victims and unaccompanied children to appropriate and adequate services.

In 2023, Italy and Albania signed an agreement to build immigration centers in Albania for migrants not classified as vulnerable from a government-provided list of “safe countries.” On October 16, authorities brought an initial group of 16 Bangladeshi and Egyptian migrants to the

centers. Government officials determined four of them had additional protection needs and transferred them to Italy. On October 18, a Rome court ordered the government to transfer the remaining 12 to Italian territory, declaring Bangladesh and Egypt were not considered “safe countries.”

Resettlement

The government offered refugees resettlement services, while both the government and the International Organization for Migration assisted refugees who opted to return to their home countries.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

There were approximately 27,000 Jews in the country. The law criminalized the public display of the Fascist stiff-armed Roman salute and the sale or display of Fascist or Nazi memorabilia. Convictions could result in imprisonment from six months to two years, with an additional eight months if it involved the selling of Fascist or Nazi memorabilia online.

According to the Center for Documentation of Contemporary Judaism’s *Annual Report on Antisemitism in Italy*, 2024 saw a sharp increase (almost double) in antisemitic acts, online and offline, over the previous year, which had already seen a significant increase after the October 7, 2023 Hamas terrorist attack against Israel. Of Italian Jews surveyed, 78 percent felt less safe to live and practice their faith.

On April 24, the Rome Jewish community reported a rise in antisemitic attacks, particularly among soccer fan groups, and urged both national and local authorities to take decisive action in punishing all forms of discrimination based on religion. On August 13, the Rome prefect announced that any soccer match where antisemitic incidents were reported would be immediately suspended.

Antisemitic societal prejudices persisted. There were reports of antisemitic remarks and actions, including physical violence against Jews, vandalism of Jewish-owned business and synagogues, and publication of antisemitic material on the internet. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni stated on several occasions that antisemitism was unacceptable and would not be tolerated.

On August 22, the New Communist Party of Italy published a list of “Zionist agents and companies” present in the country. The group’s statement declared these groups and individuals, “Jewish and non-Jewish,” had infiltrated the fabric of industry, media, education, medicine, research, and politics. The list, which contained prominent figures across Italian politics, industry, and society, drew condemnation across the political spectrum.

Internet hate speech and bullying were the most common forms of antisemitic attacks, according to the Center for Documentation of Contemporary Judaism. Most incidents occurred during Jewish holidays or celebrations. Antisemitic slogans and graffiti appeared in some cities, including Rome, Turin, and Perugia. A mural depicting two Italian Holocaust survivors was vandalized in Milan. More than 2,000 police officers regularly guarded synagogues and other Jewish community sites in the country.

For further information on antisemitism incidents, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief, see the Department of State’s annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.