

# The Controversial Security Bill Designed by Giorgia Meloni

Siljemie Bugna

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## Introduction

On the 18th of September 2023, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni requested and approved a controversial security bill. The biggest reason for controversy is the violation of 3 articles of the Italian Constitution. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was elected with one of the lowest participation rates in elections.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, after two years leading the Italian Government, the Italian population still has a negative image of Giorgia Meloni, more specifically, 52% of the respondents disapprove of her government,<sup>2</sup> and this bill is the very representation of far-right ideas that her government wishes to implement, which can be very divisive.

## The Newest Security Bill

The Italian political opposition and international newspapers such as “The Guardian” and “El País” claim that this bill targets immigrants and activists, threatening their right and freedom to protest and show dissent in a peaceful manner.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned above, the provisions of the bill are not in line with the Italian Constitution, particularly, this bill conflicts with the principles protected by Articles 3, 13 and 27, and therefore, it will likely not be approved by the Italian Constitutional Court as it criminalises and marginalises minorities<sup>4</sup>. The attack on the right to freedom to protest, which the Italian Constitution considers to be fundamental, is a threat to democracy, as demonstrations and marches are essential tools for expressing the conflicts that exist within society.

What’s more, the bill introduced 20 new crimes and increased the punishments for individuals found guilty of these offences, with new laws. In essence, the provisions of the bill heavily criminalise protests, acts of disobedience and passive resistance on different levels. Therefore, it inevitably targets minorities,<sup>5</sup> as they tend to be at the forefront of social and political movements; and attacks the right to protest, threatening the freedom of individuals to express their dissent.

The bill establishes that *“whoever... through acts of resistance, even passive, to the execution of orders given, carried out by three or more people together, promotes, organises or directs a revolt shall be punished with*

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<sup>1</sup> Tortuga. 2022. “Blog | Elezioni, Non C’è Più l’Affluenza Di Una Volta. Come va Cambiato Il Voto.” *Econopoly*.

<sup>2</sup> “Approval Rate of Giorgia Meloni 2024.” n.d. Statista.

<sup>3</sup> Giuffrida, Angela, 2024, “Demonstrations Being Held in Italy against ‘Repressive’ Security Bill.” *The Guardian*; and Íñigo Domínguez, 2024, “Giorgia Meloni’s Iron Fist: Prison for Blocking a Road and Chemical Castration for Rapists.” *EL PAÍS English*.

<sup>4</sup> Camilli, Annalisa . 2023. “Internazionale.” *Internazionale*. 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Camilli, Annalisa . 2023. “Internazionale.” *Internazionale*. 2023.

*imprisonment from one to six years.*<sup>6</sup> This claim openly contravenes Article 13 of the Italian Constitution, that is, the fundamental set of laws of the state of Italy based on values of anti-fascism, equality and freedom, that Giorgia Meloni took an oath to when she became Prime Minister. This provision subtly targets climate and political activists by criminalising gatherings and protests. These are the main tools these groups have for bringing attention to climate and socially related matters.<sup>7</sup> These protests are generally led mostly by students, the youth, and other individuals who protest against environmentally harmful infrastructures, such as high-velocity trains. The government should be fostering the growth and development of the younger generation as independent individuals who live in a free and inclusive society, but instead, it is threatening their freedom to speak up and protest on political matters.

### **Additional Ramifications of the Bill**

Moreover, the bill's effects will also be felt in prisons. Before delving into this effects, it is important to take into account that overcrowding and suicides are among the most significant issues facing the Italian penitentiary system, and the introduction of new crimes will only exacerbate this overcrowding issue.<sup>8</sup> This is ironic since the matter of protesting in prisons is also addressed in the bill. The frequency of protests in prisons had increased, due to repeated demonstrations of disconformity because, it is precisely this overcrowding that is creating inhumane conditions for inmates to live in. Giorgia Meloni's approach was then, to address this matter by introducing higher punishments for individuals who initiate and take part in protests or resistance.

Dissent and disobedience should act as a challenge to democracy, which, contrary to dictatorship, evolves and improves, becoming more inclusive and efficient. In fact, Italy, in 1968, witnessed one of the biggest revolts led by students and workers who protested and marched against the system then, fighting for their freedom, for feminism, for a less authoritarian educational system, and for workers' rights. In the following years, thanks to the protests and actions taken by these groups, Italians achieved the right to divorce (1970) and the right to abortion (1978) which contributed to women's dignity and importance in society; the right to education(1970), granting everyone equal access to education, and the workers' statute (1970) which protects the workers' freedom and dignity.

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<sup>6</sup> "Parlamento Italiano - Disegno Di Legge C. 1660 - 19a Legislatura." 2024. Senato.it. 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Angela Giuffrida, "Demonstrations Being Held in Italy against 'Repressive' Security Bill." The Guardian. The Guardian. September 25, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> "Carceri Italiane." 2019. Polizia Penitenziaria.

The Italian cultural level increased, and democracy evolved into a more inclusive and representative version of itself that supported the Italian youth instead of suppressing it. Thus, the importance of protesting for Italian society and what they are able to achieve through these means, is evident.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, it can be concluded that this bill is considered to be a threat to democracy, which the Government should be defending instead of hindering. Democracy is a cultural construction that should not incite guilt but rather a responsibility, it should not incite difference but rather equality of rights and obligations. Democracy should not exclude, rather create community.

Unfortunately, I believe the underlying issue of this bill and the consequences it may have lies in the values and ideology of the Italian far-right party, which again, was elected with one of the lowest election participation levels.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it can be argued that a big part of the Italian population does not necessarily agree with such values, sparking even more manifestation of dissent, and protests among the Italian youth and workers. The government should target the problems at the root instead of trying to silence the ones who speak up about it.

As an alternative approach, Switzerland, for example, updates every two years a resolution of international standards on how to uphold the right to protest in law, policy and practice.<sup>11</sup> Practices like those highlighted above are encouraged by “Article 19”, an organisation that protects freedom of expression and the right of people to realise the power of their voices. Similarly, Norway’s approach of dialogue and negotiation with the goal of “protecting the rule of law, democracy, equal rights” is a great example of a more innovative and stimulating approach a government can have with citizens showing dissent and demanding certain actions.<sup>12</sup>

Protests and anger arise because citizens are suffering from issues and are afraid the government is not taking them into account, which compromises their future. These issues include climate change, educational policies and infrastructure, and worker’s rights, among others. All of these are pressing matters that most people would like the government to prioritise, rather than focusing on attacking migrants and the LGBTQ+ community for example.

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<sup>9</sup> Fonzo, Erminio. 2024. “Cos’è Stato Il Movimento Del ’68: Breve Storia Delle Contestazioni in Italia E Nel Mondo.” *Geopop*.

<sup>10</sup> “Approval Rate of Giorgia Meloni 2024.” n.d. Statista.

<sup>11</sup> Article 19, 2024, “Europe: Urgent Need to Protect the Right to Protest.”

<sup>12</sup> “A Norwegian Perspective on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding.” n.d. Alliance Magazine.

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