

Italy's general strike and protest of November 28–29: A political eruption of the working class against war and austerity

Marc Wells

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Italy's national general strike of November 28, followed by mass protests on November 29 coinciding with the International Day of Solidarity with Palestine, marks the third countrywide strike in as many months.

The two events express a rising movement of the Italian working class against the authoritarian, pro-war policies of the Meloni government, and more broadly of the international working class against attacks on democratic rights, imperialist war and genocide. The proposed 2026 budget law, the “Manovra 2026,” provided the immediate trigger, but the strike wave reflects far deeper opposition to social inequality, wage erosion, militarization and Italy's role in NATO's global war plans.

The November 28 strike, called by the base unions USB, CUB, COBAS, SGB and others, mobilized tens of thousands in transport, healthcare, education, public administration and private industry across the country. Rail and air travel were heavily disrupted, with a 24-hour rail walkout beginning the evening of November 27 and ITA Airways canceling at least 26 flights. Urban transit networks slowed or ground to a halt. Motorway workers walked out. Healthcare workers stopped work while maintaining emergency services. Schools, municipal offices and logistics hubs participated widely.

Workers see austerity and militarism as two sides of the same policy. In every sector the issues are the same: collapsing real wages, increasingly unbearable working conditions, extended retirement age and the state's refusal to invest in social needs while pouring billions into rearmament. Workers demanded a minimum wage of €2,000 monthly, a reduction of the retirement age to 62, and a sweeping redirection of public resources from weapons to healthcare, education and housing.

These demands expose the real class and political character of the Manovra 2026. It is a war budget. With inflation eroding incomes and entire regions facing social collapse, the government has chosen to increase military spending, deepen Italy's role in NATO operations, reduce

funding for essential services and facilitate corporate enrichment.

The strike is a political eruption of the working class against a capitalist government that is dragging the population into deeper poverty while aligning the country with ever more dangerous global conflicts.

The following day, November 29, the strike's momentum surged into the streets. A massive national demonstration in Rome, estimated at around 100,000 participants, marched from Piramide to San Giovanni. Organized by USB, CUB and various Palestinian solidarity groups, the protest fused opposition to the war budget with condemnation of Italy's complicity in the Gaza genocide. The demonstration coincided with the International Day of Solidarity with Palestine and followed weeks of huge rallies throughout Europe, the Middle East and the Americas.

The Rome march was led by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, climate activist Greta Thunberg, and Brazilian activist Thiago Avila of the Global Sumud Flotilla. Across the country tens of thousands demonstrated in Genoa, Milan, Bologna, Naples and Turin. Chants of „Stop agreements with Israel. Sanctions and an embargo now” reflected the profound anger toward the so-called Trump “truce,” denounced by the protesters as a fraud that recognizes no rights for the Palestinian people and permits Israel to expand its occupation under the cover of diplomacy.

The flyer for the Rome march declared: “This truce is a lie, a way for the illegitimate state of Israel to continue its occupation and colonial conquest. Italy talks about peace after having supplied weapons and directly supported the genocide.” There is growing recognition that the Gaza war is inseparable from the broader imperialist agenda pursued by the United States, NATO and their allies.

The November 29 demonstrations also included chants against journalists, highlighting a broad and justified hostility toward the corporate media whose coverage of both

the Gaza genocide and the Italian strike wave has been consistently false, distorted and complicit. The anger directed at the press was not merely about Palestine. It was an expression of opposition to the media's role as an instrument of the state, promoting war narratives and blocking discussion of the working class struggle against austerity.

This context is essential to understand the manufactured political furor surrounding Francesca Albanese's remarks about the November 28 intrusion into *La Stampa*'s newsroom by individuals identified as pro-Palestinian demonstrators. Speaking at a Global Movement to Gaza event at Roma Tre University, Albanese's comments were mild.

She condemned the intrusion, raised her hands to underscore her insistence on non-violence, and stated that the newsroom deserved full justice. She did not endorse the action or excuse it. Her single "provocation," if it can be called that, was to say the episode should prompt the press to "refocus on facts."

This was an unobjectionable and entirely accurate statement. For nearly 80 years, from the founding of Israel to the present genocide in Gaza, the Western press has played an indispensable role in whitewashing war crimes, concealing imperialist interests and demonizing oppressed populations. Albanese did not even suggest that state provocateurs could have exploited the situation. She merely pointed to the media's long record of distortions and omissions.

Yet even this was intolerable to the political and media establishment. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni seized on the remarks, posturing as defender of press freedom while asserting that it was "gravely wrong" to imply the media could bear any responsibility. Her indignation was both self-serving and politically calculated. The media is an essential ideological weapon of the state. Any challenge to its credibility threatens the entire structure of rule.

More revealing still was the response of the so-called center-left. Democratic Party Senator Filippo Sensi denounced Albanese's words about the "fascist aggression" against *La Stampa* as "horrificing," accusing her of condescension and dismissing her comments as an unacceptable lecture to journalists.

Sensi's outburst is an exposure of the Democratic Party's rightward evolution. Long bound to NATO, war policy and the security apparatus, the PD now displays the same thin-skinned intolerance for dissent as the far right. Its representatives compete with Meloni in defending the media's role as an unquestionable pillar of the state and branding even the mildest criticism as an attack on democracy.

The disproportionate attention given to Albanese's remarks is deliberate. In the face of mass strikes and a growing political movement of workers and youth, the ruling class seeks to deflect attention away from the grievances driving hundreds of thousands into the streets. By inflating a peripheral incident into a national scandal, the press diverts scrutiny from its own complicity in war propaganda and its suppression of the social and political crisis confronting millions.

Beneath this nervousness lies the ruling class's real fear. The general strikes of the past three months, culminating in the actions of November 28–29, reveal an increasingly conscious and politically explosive working class. Workers are drawing connections between austerity, militarism and the capitalist system itself. They are taking action independently of the official union federations, which have long collaborated with the state and employers. Even the CGIL, which plans limited actions on December 12, is acting primarily to contain and defuse the movement rather than advance it.

The Italian strike wave is part of a broader international offensive by workers against inflation, inequality and war. From Germany to France, from the UK to the United States, from the Middle East to Latin America, the objective conditions for a global movement against capitalism are emerging. The potential of this movement is nothing less than revolutionary.

In Italy the events of November 28–29 represent a political turning point. The working class has entered the stage of history once again as a powerful force, challenging not only the Meloni government, but the entire trajectory of war, austerity and authoritarianism pursued by the capitalist class. The task now is to develop the leadership and organization required to unify these struggles, break free of the union bureaucracies and link the fight against war with the fight for international socialism.



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