

Protests erupt in Italy against ICE presence at Winter Olympics in Milan

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Last week's announcement that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will operate on Italian soil during the Milan–Cortina Winter Olympics provoked an outpouring of opposition in Italy.

The ICE agency is infamous worldwide for its politically-driven executions of US citizens in Minneapolis. The announcement of its arrival in Milan follows the assault by ICE agents of two Italian journalists covering protests in Minneapolis last week. The video, viewed hundreds of thousands of times, provoked an outcry and demands that Italian authorities take a stand against the Trump administration.

Yet now ICE is to intervene at the Winter Olympic Games in Italy, which begin on February 6 in the mountain resort town of Cortina D'Ampezzo near Milan. The games will host more than 3,000 athletes from over 90 nations. Olympic organizers expect 2 million visitors, including 60,000 for the opening ceremony in Milan's San Siro stadium.

Workers took to social media to denounce the deployment of ICE in Italy, calling for protests and sit-ins over the weekend. They also launched a Change.org petition against ICE, which has already gathered 37,000 signatures. An outpouring of comments on X denounced ICE's lawlessness against the American people, as well as warning that ICE could use the same murderous tactics during the Olympics.

Several thousand people joined in protests on Saturday and Sunday against ICE on the Piazza XXV Aprile in Milan, blowing whistles and singing Bruce Springsteen songs, in solidarity with anti-ICE protests in the United States.

The square commemorates April 25, 1945, the first day of the general strike and armed insurrection of Milan workers called by the Committees of National Resistance of the Italian resistance against Nazi and Italian fascist authorities in the city. On April 28, resistance fighters

captured and shot Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. The next day after that, Mussolini's corpse was publicly exhibited on Milan's Piazzale Loreto.

This eruption of outrage against ICE has provoked a crisis for Italy's fascist prime minister, Georgia Meloni, who has cultivated ties with Trump and far-right megabillionaire Elon Musk. Her party, the Brothers of Italy, descends from the Italian Social Movement (MSI) formed in 1946 by former members of the Italian fascist regime against whom workers had risen up in Milan and across Northern Italy in 1945.

The Meloni government has tried to portray cooperation with Trump, the would-be Führer of America, as enhancing Italy's prestige and capacity to host "orderly" games. Italian authorities initially denied reports that ICE would be present at the Games. They then tried to downplay ICE's role, suggesting it would only assist with security for US athletes.

But last week, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi met Tilman Fertitta, the billionaire US Ambassador to Italy, to prepare ICE's deployment to Milan. They discussed how ICE agents would join US State Department security teams at the Olympics, supposedly "to vet and mitigate risks from transnational criminal organizations."

Piantedosi said the Olympics security operation would feature field deployments, intelligence operations and, for the first time at a major event in Italy, a 24-hour cybersecurity control room. Additionally, 6,000 law enforcement officers will guard Olympic sites with no-fly zones and restricted access-only policies.

Clearly, Trump's far-right ICE police and the far-right Italian regime are setting out to militarize Milan, threatening bloody assaults on its population and those attending the games.

The ICE squads illegally occupying Minneapolis and other US cities operate without democratic constraints.

Videos of the targeted execution on January 24 of Intensive Care Unit nurse Alex Pretti by immigration agents in Minneapolis, after the similar murder of mother Renée Nicole Good on January 7, have starkly shown this to hundreds of millions worldwide. By deploying ICE in Milan, Meloni is legitimizing murder and intimidation of migrants and protesters in Italy and across Europe.

Meloni's foreign minister, Antonio Tajani, snapped back at criticisms of ICE in Italy, saying that the ICE agents in Milan are "not going to be those who are on the street in Minneapolis." He added, "it's not like the SS are coming," referring to the Nazi paramilitary organization that helped suppress the German labor movement, organized the Holocaust and led the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and European resistance movements.

Tajani's attempt to lull Italian workers to sleep is based on a political lie. In reality, with ICE, Trump is trying to build an organization as similar as it can to Nazi paramilitary groups. ICE is an organ of state terror overseeing mass repression, deportations, mass detention and extrajudicial murder on behalf of a ruling class that views the entire working population as disposable.

Moreover, the reaction of Italy's official opposition parties and union bureaucracies show they have no perspective to seriously oppose—let alone turn back—the growing influence of the far right that has seen the political heirs of Mussolini take power in Italy.

Elly Schlein—leader of Italy's "center-left" Democratic Party (PD) founded by factions of the Stalinist Communist Party after it dissolved itself in 1991—expressed her concern at the arrival in Italy of "an armed militia that is not respecting the law on American soil. ... And so there is the concern that they would not respect them on Italian soil either."

Giuseppe Conte, former Italian Prime Minister and the leader of the populist Five Star Movement (M5S), blandly advised the Meloni government to "set our own limits" and "make clear decisions" about the ICE presence in Italy.

Milan's Green mayor, Giuseppe Sala, said city authorities "don't need ICE" agents for security at the Olympics, and that "They're not welcome in Milan. ... This is a militia that kills." As anger mounts among workers in Italy and across Europe at European governments' obsequiousness towards Trump, Sala timidly asked his fellow Italian officials: "Could we ever say 'no' to Trump? This isn't about severing relations or creating a diplomatic incident, but could we say 'No?'"

The Stalinist-led CGIL union bureaucracy, representing 5.1 million Italian workers, issued a vague pledge that if ICE came to Milan, the union would be "forced to mobilize to protect the safety of people living and working near the Olympic Games."

All these organizations, starting with the CGIL bureaucracy, are distancing themselves from ICE for fear of explosive working class anger on both sides of the Atlantic. The growing opposition to ICE in the United States, with last month's mass strike in Minneapolis, points to a deep-going radicalization of the American working class, impelling it into struggle. In Europe in recent months, Meloni's austerity budgets have provoked mass strikes by millions of workers in Italy, alongside similar strikes in Belgium and Portugal.

Those who call to avoid creating an incident with ICE, issue appeals to Meloni or treat the ICE presence in Milan as a local security issue are seeking to disorient and demobilize this growing anger in the working class. Italy's union bureaucracies have worked relentlessly to isolate strikes against Meloni, limit them to one-day actions and block the construction of a movement to bring down her government.

What is required is not more appeals to Meloni, but independent, organized working-class resistance by the rank-and-file, linked internationally to similar struggles that are emerging around the world, above all in the United States, against far-right dictatorship.

The Socialist Equality Parties in the United States and Europe and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees are fighting to build such an independent movement. Workers and youth must oppose ICE's arrival in Milan and the attempt to turn the Olympic games in the city into a laboratory of militarism and repression. Opposition to ICE, in Italy as in the United States, must be made the point of departure of a struggle of the working class to remove far-right governments from office and transfer power to the working people.



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