

# Italy's Meloni government in crisis as rift with Israel and Trump opens

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On April 14, the government of Giorgia Meloni announced the suspension of Italy's military cooperation agreement with Israel, the 2003 memorandum codified as Law 94/2005. "In view of the current situation, the government has decided to suspend the automatic renewal of the defense agreement with Israel," Meloni said in Verona.

Presented as a decisive response to escalating tensions, the move exposes the deepening contradictions confronting Italian imperialism.

At the center of this crisis stands Italy's role in the Middle East, where military, economic and diplomatic interests collide. Italian troops deployed under the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) are presented as "peacekeepers," but are part of an imperialist presence in a region critical to European energy and strategic interests. With roughly 1,000 troops, Italy remains one of the mission's largest contributors, treating the deployment as essential to maintaining influence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Tensions erupted on April 8, 2026, when Israeli forces fired warning shots at an Italian convoy in southern Lebanon. Meloni denounced the incident as "completely unacceptable," citing a violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 and invoking national sovereignty.

The agreement had enabled extensive military, industrial and intelligence collaboration in the last two decades, including joint weapons development and training operations conducted largely beyond parliamentary scrutiny and with the support of the entire political establishment.

Italy's government is entering a period of acute crisis. Its increasingly erratic foreign policy expresses the growing inability to reconcile global tensions, economic fragility and social unrest within the framework of capitalism. Rome's gyrations signal not independence or

peace plans, but the breakdown of the postwar imperialist order.

Italy's strategic fixation on Lebanon and the wider region reflects major economic interests, including gas exploration and pipeline projects tied to Eni.

Crucially, the suspension does not halt the flow of arms. Italian weapons manufacturers such as Leonardo S.p.A. and Fincantieri S.p.A. can continue fulfilling existing contracts. Unless licenses already granted are revoked deliveries will proceed uninterrupted. The government has made clear it will not take that step.

This duplicity is not new. In January 2024, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani announced a supposed halt to arms exports to Israel, only for Defense Minister Guido Crosetto to clarify that it applied only to new authorizations. Existing deals continued. Italy did not stop arming Israel; it adjusted its language to deflect public outrage.

The same pattern defines Rome's stance toward the European Union–Israel Association Agreement. Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, have repeatedly called for its suspension, citing violations of its human rights clause. The EU has acknowledged these breaches. Yet Italy, alongside other powers, has blocked meaningful action.

This position stands in direct opposition to popular sentiment. Over the past year, millions have demonstrated in Rome, Milan, Turin, Bologna, Naples and Palermo, denouncing the genocide in Gaza and demanding an end to Italian complicity. Students, workers and youth have united under slogans such as "Stop the massacre" and "No weapons to Israel."

However, in June 2025 the Meloni government renewed the military memorandum for five years. This came despite legal warnings that such cooperation could constitute complicity in war crimes and mass petitions demanding its termination. A complaint filed with the

International Criminal Court in October 2025 named Meloni, Tajani, Crosetto and Leonardo executive Roberto Cingolani, accusing them of complicity in genocide.

Italy's historical alliance with Israel is not an aberration, but part of a broader imperialist offensive in the Middle East. As a secondary power, Italy operates as a junior partner within a US-led framework aimed at maintaining imperialist dominance over a strategically vital region.

Yet this alignment is under acute strain. The escalation of the US-Israel war against Iran in early 2026 exposed deep fissures within the Atlantic alliance between Washington and the major European powers, including France, Germany and the UK. Like them, Italy refused to participate in offensive operations or support a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

Italy's dependence on maritime energy flows makes it vulnerable to disruptions in the Gulf. A closure of Hormuz would threaten global oil and gas supplies, with severe consequences for an already fragile economy. The government framed its stance as a defense of "freedom of navigation," participating instead in limited efforts to secure shipping routes.

Trump denounced Italy's refusal as a failure of alliance obligations, exposing tensions that reflect the erosion of the postwar framework.

In March 2026, Meloni denied a US request to use the Sigonella base for Iran-related operations, signaling a willingness to restrict American military activity when it conflicts with national interests.

Meloni also criticized Trump for attacking Pope Leo XIV after the pontiff spoke out against the war in Iran.

At the same time, Italy has maintained commitments elsewhere, including NATO operations in Eastern Europe. This selective alignment attempts to balance obligations with national interests but deepens underlying contradictions.

Domestically, the entire political establishment has rallied behind the government's stance. "Opposition" figures such as Democratic Party leader Elly Schlein have adopted nationalist rhetoric, defending Meloni against foreign criticism.

"No foreign leader can dare to insult and threaten our country and our government," Schlein declared. This statement summarizes the class character of Italian politics: beneath superficial differences, all major parties defend the interests of Italian capital.

The decisive factor driving these maneuvers lies also in the intensifying social crisis. Italy remains the only euro-

area country where real wages have declined over three decades. Living standards continue to deteriorate while inequality deepens.

This discontent has found expression in mass opposition to war. Protesting the Gaza genocide have drawn hundreds of thousands onto the streets. The government also suffered a setback on March 26, 2026, when voters rejected a reactionary constitutional referendum on judicial reform by 54 percent, exposing the fragility of Meloni's base.

Faced with mounting anger, the ruling class fears a broader eruption of social struggle. This concern affects foreign policy. The reluctance to fully align with US war plans against Iran reflects fear that such actions could trigger mass opposition at home.

In the April 25 demonstrations marking the 81st anniversary of Italian liberation from fascism, hundreds of thousands protested war, authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic rights. While invoking democracy and unity, the government moved to discredit the protests, using dubious isolated incidents to justify repression and equating opposition to Israel's war with antisemitism.

Actions by dockworkers in Italy and across the Mediterranean point to the potential for a more powerful movement. Refusals to handle military cargo demonstrate the capacity of the working class to disrupt the machinery of war and indicate the emergence of international opposition.

The crisis of the Meloni government encapsulates a broader historical and international breakdown. The postwar order, built on US economic and military dominance, is fracturing under the weight of global capitalism's contradictions. No faction of the ruling class offers a progressive alternative.

The decisive question is the development of a global independent political movement of the working class. Growing opposition to war and austerity must be transformed into a conscious struggle against capitalism. Only through the international unification of workers can the drive toward imperialist conflict be halted and a new social order established based on human need rather than profit.



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