

Moroccan worker dies after police pin him face-down during arrest in Bologna, sparking protests across Italy

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The death of Abderrahim Fakir, a 42-year-old Moroccan-born worker, pinned face-down on scorching asphalt by Italian police while begging for his life, has provoked outrage and protests nationwide and drawn comparisons to the police murder of George Floyd in the United States six years ago.

On July 19, Fakir, a logistics worker and small business owner who had lived in Italy for over three decades, travelled to the Pilastrò district of Bologna, a working-class neighbourhood with a high concentration of immigrant residents, to visit relatives. He was in a state of severe psychological distress, burdened by debts from client defaults that had forced him to lay off employees, and gripped by fear of deportation despite holding legal residence status under the European Union's draconian migration pact.

Police and Red Cross paramedics arrived shortly after 12:30pm. Ambient temperatures exceeded 35°C, with asphalt temperatures reaching approximately 65°C. Officers deployed pepper spray, then physically tackled Fakir to the ground, placing him face-down in a prone position. A six-minute-and-56-second video recorded by residents from a nearby balcony shows two police officers and a civilian pressing their body weight onto Fakir's back, torso and legs.

For over four minutes, Fakir, handcuffed behind his back, can be heard crying out in Italian, "Aiuto, aiuto, basta!" ("Help, help, that's enough!"). Four Red Cross paramedics stood watching. None intervened to assess his breathing or vital signs. When Fakir fell silent and motionless, officers proceeded to bind his ankles with a zip tie before checking his condition. He was pronounced dead at the scene at 12:53pm.

The killing in Bologna is not an Italian aberration, nor is it primarily a question of racism. It is the product of a

global offensive against democratic rights being carried out by ruling classes everywhere as the crisis of capitalism deepens and the international working class moves into struggle.

The parallels with George Floyd are striking: an unarmed man pinned to the pavement, his audible distress ignored by armed agents of the state and passive medical personnel, the entire sequence captured on video by a civilian bystander. In Bologna as in Minneapolis, protesters have adopted the slogan "Say his name."

The racist framework imposed on Floyd's murder by the Democratic Party, the identity politics industry and the pseudo-left groups was an attempt to obscure the fundamental class character of police violence.

As the Socialist Equality Party explained in its June 2020 statement, the police are an instrument of class rule: the "public power" Engels identified as the defining feature of the state, which "grows stronger in proportion as class antagonisms within the state become more acute."

The victims of police violence internationally are overwhelmingly poor and working class, of all nationalities and backgrounds. The essential connection is class, not race.

Fakir's killing is the logical outcome of policies pursued by the far-right government of Giorgia Meloni, whose party, Fratelli d'Italia, has direct roots in Mussolini's fascist movement, the first such party to lead a major European government since World War II.

Meloni has systematically targeted immigrants through measures like the 2023 Decreto Cutro, which abolished special protection permits and created a class of isolated, legally precarious workers. Her intention is to sow divisions in the working class and rally support for her government as it imposes austerity by scapegoating

migrants for the social ills produced by capitalism.

Her government has driven the share of Italy's population in absolute poverty to a record 9.8 percent. And in June 2025, it enacted Law No. 80/2025, the broadest expansion of criminal penalties in postwar Italy, which recriminalizes roadblocks (directly targeting strike pickets), increases penalties for protests affecting infrastructure, and creates new offenses for nonviolent resistance in detention centres.

The investigation into Fakir's death has become the first high-profile application of the Meloni government's newly created Modello 45-bis under Article 335 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the so-called *scudo penale* (penal shield). Under this provision, introduced in the 2026 Security Decree, police officers and other state agents involved in fatal incidents are not entered into the formal register of criminal suspects but into a separate preliminary registry that delays formal suspect status.

The Bologna Prosecutor's Office has registered the two police officers and four paramedics under this shield. The family's attorney, Fabio Anselmo, has formally requested that the investigation be transferred to an independent judicial body, citing European Court of Human Rights standards, a demand the government will fight tooth and nail.

Meloni has responded to the killing by denouncing the protests as "unacceptable" and declaring "total solidarity" with law enforcement. Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini launched a campaign under the slogan "Hands off the Police" and warned Fakir's family against speaking of "revenge." Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi stated that questioning police conduct reflected "a fundamental lack of trust in democratic institutions." Galeazzo Bignami, parliamentary leader of Fratelli d'Italia, demanded the resignation of Bologna's mayor for supporting a protest rally.

The response of the opposition Democratic Party (PD) has been to feign outrage. PD leader Elly Schlein declared that Fakir's death represented "a catastrophic failure of the state" and demanded the release of body-camera footage. But the PD bears direct responsibility for the legal architecture that produces such killings.

It was the PD government of Matteo Renzi that introduced the Jobs Act, weakening labour protections. It was the PD-backed Minniti-Orlando Decree of 2017 that abolished second-instance judicial appeals for asylum seekers and pioneered the criminalization of Mediterranean rescue NGOs. The Bossi-Fini Law, which ties residence permits to employment contracts and has

never been repealed by any government of centre-left or right, remains in force.

The PD is bound to the same imperialist alliance system, the same EU austerity framework, and the same defense of capitalist property relations. Its crocodile tears over Fakir's death are intended to contain working-class anger within the parliamentary channels at a time when the bourgeoisie is breaking with democratic norms and turning ever more firmly towards police state measures. In the US under Donald Trump, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol agents operate with near-total impunity, killing over 190 people in a decade according to ACLU data.

The attack on democratic rights is the international response of a ruling class that can no longer govern through consent and must increasingly resort to force. Once democratic rights are stripped from one section of society, the precedent extends to all: workers resisting layoffs, youth opposing militarism, tenants fighting eviction.

Fakir's killing is the other side of the same coin as the strike wave now sweeping Italy. As the WSWS documented earlier this month of Italy's summer of struggles, workers in aviation, rail, logistics, maritime transport and the public sector are in open conflict with the Meloni government, linking wage demands to opposition to war, genocide and authoritarian rule. The police are being deployed against a working class that is increasingly in motion.

The working class cannot look to any section of the capitalist political establishment to defend democratic rights. The police cannot be reformed. The fight against police violence must be fused with the struggle against inequality, war and the capitalist system.



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