# VIDEO: Young Italians take to the streets—“In Italy we are doing the revolution, like the French students”

**Our reporters**
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On Friday, November 20, up to 1.5 million workers and young people protested in more than 100 Italian cities against Giorgia Meloni’s government’s budget of war and austerity. Students had called an international strike day back in September.

The Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), Italy’s largest trade union federation, which has close ties to the opposition parties, above all the Democratic Party (PD), then called a general strike for the same date. Smaller and more militant base unions, among them the COBAS and the Unione Sindacale di Base (USB), called their own strikes and marched separately with the students in Rome (see our first report and the WSWS statement distributed at the demonstrations).

WSWS reporters spoke to students and young workers about the cost of living, war and the government’s attacks on democratic rights.

**Lorenzo**, 18, came to Rome from his small hometown to join the strike. He is still in high school, wants to study psychology and works part-time to make ends meet. Prices for fuel, car insurance and food have exploded, he says, while wages have stayed the same. His family is struggling like many others: “We can’t go on like this.” In his town, he sees the result on the street: “We used to have about six homeless people, and we all knew them. Now there are about 20.”

He fears this is only the start: “If we go on like this, my family is going to end up on the street, and so are most families. So, I’m coming out onto the streets while I still have a house, to represent the people who can’t be here with us.”

He says schools have lost staff, and many buildings are falling apart. In his school, often only one toilet in three works. He saw the same decline in the local hospital while caring for his grandfather. They used to wait about two hours for treatment. In the last years of his grandfather’s life, they had to wait six hours even with an appointment, because fewer and fewer people were being paid to work in hospitals.

Instead, the money goes to rearmament and war: “And for what? Like to go bomb someone in Ukraine or in Russia, right? To send equipment to Ukraine and Israel for example.” For Lorenzo, these are “economic wars, not people’s wars.”

Lorenzo doesn’t think that Meloni will change course under pressure from the streets alone. In his view, the real power lies with the private investors and funds who own stakes in the railways, airports and other infrastructure. “That’s why Meloni can’t stop doing what she’s doing. We have to eradicate the current government and the current state of how Italy works.” Privatization was sold to his parents’ generation as progress, he says. Now the infrastructure is in the hands of a few. “And the people who own it have of course interest in making money. And how do you make money right now? With war.”

Lorenzo took part in the march of the “Italia in Piazza” student movement, which united with the workers of the more radical base unions. He sharply criticizes the role of the CGIL: “They don’t just applaud the Partito Democratico [PD], they are almost part of it. We hate the CGIL, because they made agreements with Confindustria and Confcommercio, which are the organizations of employers and owners, not of workers.”

The CGIL strike was organized in such a way that it didn’t create too many problems for the companies, he says. “But it has to be a problem for them! That’s the point of a strike.”

He supports the call of the WSWS to unite students and workers: “If we as students come down for the workers today and come down tomorrow for the ones who work at the post office, who work in the coal mines, who work in the salt mines, they’re going to come down for us, right?”

The same sense of solidarity brought **Chiara**, a university student of educational science in Rome, onto the streets. She doesn’t see her presence as a choice. “Students and young

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people in Europe and all over the world want change," she says. "The question is not why am I here but how could I not be here?"

She volunteers with an organization that helps migrants and is especially worried by the government's new cap on non-Italian pupils in schools. "But what means Italian? What's the criteria—the color of your skin, where your parents come from or the language you speak?" she asks. "As a student I think it's important to be on their side."

A government decree, approved by the Senate on November 19, limits the share of pupils without Italian citizenship and with little or no schooling in Italy to 30 percent in first-year classes from the 2027–28 school year. It is just one of the Meloni government's reactionary attacks on migrants and refugees and serves its nationalist propaganda.

On war, Chiara accuses the government of double standards. "If you say you defend democracy like they do in the Ukraine war you also have to stand up against the genocide in Gaza." Europe also stays silent about other wars it helps fund, such as those in Sudan and Congo, she says.

On the proxy war between NATO and Russia in Ukraine, she rejects the logic of national defense: "The point is not about defending a country as a whole but being on the side of people. The people are the same in both parties." For Chiara, war is connected to capitalism: "The decisions that are taken are not based on our real interests and to help someone, but to obtain economical advantages or power."

**Blanca**, 26, feels these priorities in her own life. She wants to work as a screenwriter but faces difficulties "because all the public funding for culture and arts is being taken to fund wars and genocides". She is currently without a regular job but works as a babysitter and in seasonal jobs.

"I came here today to protest the wars and genocides going on. We see them live 24 hours a day. I'm also against what they do with the climate. They're making our lives unlivable. We have no future so we must fight for that."

She explains that Italy is one of the leading countries funding the genocide in Gaza— not least through the arms manufacturer Leonardo, whose largest shareholder is the Italian state. "We're really ashamed of that."

In her view, Meloni is a fascist. "In one of her old interviews she said that Mussolini was a great politician." Blanca points to three new laws of Meloni's "against democracy itself and freedom":

A new electoral law, nicknamed "Stabilicum," which parliament passed on October 8, gives 70 extra seats in the Chamber and 35 in the Senate to any coalition that wins more than 42 percent of the vote. This authoritarian measure is intended to strengthen the position of Meloni and the far-right forces ahead of the next election. "It is really similar to the law Mussolini made to gain power of the parliament and the government," Blanca comments. She is referring to the 1923 Acerbo Law, which handed two-thirds of the seats to the list that came first.

On October 20, after clashes at demonstrations, the Cabinet approved a new "security" decree that creates the offense of "organized violence at public demonstrations", punishable by two to five years in prison and fines of up to €20,000—and up to 12 years for those who organize or incite it, including online. Police can now detain people, including minors, for up to 12 hours if they are deemed a danger, even without having committed an offense, and parents can be fined for their children's participation in riots.

Finally, on November 17, just before the general strike, parliament gave approval to a law that adopts the working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The law does not create new criminal offenses, but critics warn that it gives legal weight to a definition used internationally to brand opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza as antisemitic.

Therefore, Blanca sees no point in negotiations with the fascist Meloni government and places her hopes in the workers instead: "The workers are the only ones who can stop this because the whole society stands on workers." Her message is to keep fighting and unite as a mass, echoing the old slogan, which Pink Floyd also took up: "United we stand, divided we fall."

Like Blanca, the two high-school students **Luca and Antonio** oppose the new antisemitism law: "If I say that Israel is committing a genocide in Gaza then it's now a crime," said Antonio. They demand "more money for schools instead of 14 billion [euros] into the war economy." Antonio says: "I'm against capitalism. We pay a lot of taxes, but the healthcare is shit, the schools in Italy—I have no words to describe them—and the police is repressive."

Luca and Antonio see themselves as part of a wider movement: "In Italy we are doing the revolution, like the French students," said Antonio. Their message to workers and youth protesting around the world: "We have to fight because our future is important. It is our future and Meloni and all these governments can't stop us from having a better future than this," concluded Luca.

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