



European Network Against Racism
Réseau européen contre le racisme
Europäisches Netz gegen Rassismus

PRESS RELEASE

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Race riots in Italy highlight the urgent need to respect migrants' human rights

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is seriously concerned about the violent riots which took place over the last days in the city of Rosarno in Italy (Calabria region), following injuries inflicted onto two immigrants by an unknown party using air rifles.

Whilst firmly condemning this violence, ENAR is worried that these events reveal the consequences of long-lasting xenophobic and anti-immigrant discourse and policies by the Italian government as well as by mainstream political parties. The emergence of an anti-immigrant climate in Italy has fuelled prejudice and tensions between migrants and the local population, thereby hindering integration and social cohesion.

In addition, most of the migrants in this region of Italy live and work in subhuman conditions. Research by NGO Médecins sans Frontières on the work and living conditions of seasonal workers in Southern Italy, highlighted in ENAR Italy's 2008 Shadow report on racism¹, shows that 90% of interviewees had no work contract although they were legally staying in Italy and that seasonal workers are often exploited, receiving a low pay and working under the pressure of "mediators" or employers.

The real "emergency" is not, as the Minister of the Interior and leader of Lega Nord Mr. Maroni believes, the presence of undocumented migrants. It is rather the widespread criminal economy that exploits immigrants and xenophobic legislation that forces them in a state of permanent precariousness and absence of rights. ENAR calls on the Italian government to ensure that racist and xenophobic acts are not tolerated and that the fundamental rights of migrants are respected. It has a responsibility to ensure that every person enjoys the basic human rights to health and housing, while respecting equal rights granted by Italian laws to all workers, regardless of their nationality or ethnic origin.

Luciano Scagliotti, ENAR Board member for Italy, said: "We are extremely worried by the tensions exposed by the riots in Rosarno. They have brought to light the damaging consequences that fuelling anti-immigrant sentiments can have. Italian politicians must realise this and take urgent steps to put human rights back at the centre of the immigration debate in Italy."

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and represents more than 600 NGOs spread around the European Union. ENAR aims to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national and European initiatives.

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¹ See ENAR 2008 Shadow Report on racism in Italy, p. 12: www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15294&langue=EN