

Mr Matteo Renzi,
Prime Minister of Italy
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Italy

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Cc: Mr Sandro Gozzi,
Undersecretary of State for EU Affairs
Palazzo Montecitorio
Piazza di Montecitorio
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Italy

Our Ref: B 1655

5 February 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY: END OF PRESIDENCY REVIEW

Following our letter of 24 June 2014 containing Amnesty International's recommendations to Italy's Presidency to the European Union (EU), and the end of the Presidency, we are publishing our evaluation of the Italian Presidency's implementation of these recommendations on human rights¹. Copies of this letter and our evaluation have also been sent to the relevant Ministers. We were disappointed not to have received replies from you and the relevant Ministers to our letters dated 28 November 2014, where we requested information on the government's evaluation of the implementation of these recommendations.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge that the Italian government's engagement with Amnesty International has in general been positive. We appreciated the open dialogue and the opportunity to discuss our recommendations, in particular with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Federica Mogherini and Paolo Gentiloni, as well as key officials and representatives at the EU level and from the Italian Permanent Representation to the EU. Throughout the Presidency, we noted and appreciated the various statements that focused on the need to protect human rights in the EU's internal and external policies.

At the beginning of the Italian Presidency, we were grateful to meet and discuss the issue of the death penalty with the then MoFA, Federica Mogherini, who strongly committed to working with national and international civil society organisations on the United Nations (UN) Moratorium on the use of the death penalty. We also welcomed Italy's commitment to promoting the Istanbul Convention on Violence against Women, which was transposed into Italian law. We call on the Italian authorities now to ensure that this process is adequately resourced, and that prevention and protection remain a key focus.

Despite these positive actions, Amnesty International regrets that the Italian Presidency missed important opportunities to advance the protection of human rights in the region and beyond, in several areas.

For example, despite calls to maintain Operation Mare Nostrum (OMN) until it could be safely replaced by a viable operation of comparable scale,² without protection gaps, OMN was closed down on 31 October 2014, with Frontex's operation 'Triton' 'taking over'. Triton's reduced remit could result in more lives being at risk in the Mediterranean.

¹ http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Presidency/Evaluation_of_the_Italian_EU_Presidency.pdf

² http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Letters2014/B1617_October_2014_JHA_Council_letter.pdf

With regards to EU external relations, the Italian Presidency had several crucial opportunities to raise human rights concerns, for example, when hosting the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in October 2014, as well as in connection with key cases of individuals at risk, such as that of Chinese human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, released in August 2014.

Too often, EU and member states' policies on human rights towards third countries are undermined by other perceived interests (such as trade and security), and by a lack of consistent messaging by all EU actors, including individual member states. At the same time, coherence between engagement on human rights at home and abroad will be vital to ensure that the EU and its member states remain credible and legitimate human rights actors wherever they engage. We urge the Italian government to make its engagement on these and other human rights issues public, and to reinforce human rights work in Italian foreign policy and EU external action in the future.

We would like to thank the many officials and representatives of your government who worked with us throughout the Italian Presidency. As you may have seen, Amnesty International has now issued a new set of recommendations to the Latvian Presidency of the EU.³ We trust that Italy, as a member of the Presidency Trio, will fully support Latvia, and subsequently Luxembourg, in implementing these recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Gianni Rufini
Director General
Amnesty International Italy



Ivorna McGowan
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Amnesty International European Institutions Office

³ http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Letters2015/B1640_Policy_Priorities_for_the_Latvian_Presidency.pdf