



## IMMIGRATION, OR WHEN POWER IS SCHIZOPHRENIC

Even as Italy acknowledges its need for migrants, it remains laser-focused on keeping unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers out, and harshly treating those who find their way in. Those who come through legal channels, too, encounter scant investment and difficulty in acquiring Italian citizenship. Is there an invisible line drawn between migrants and “patria”?

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At a recent hearing before the Parliamentary commission of inquiry into the economic and social effects of the country's ongoing demographic transition, the Italian Minister of Economy and Finance, Giancarlo Giorgetti, professed great concern over our demographic crisis. If fewer and fewer children continue to be born here and our borders are closed to migrants, we will no longer have the ability to move forward or the resources with which to ensure financial resources and care for our elderly. “This is an issue that the entire political class is aware of, but tends to put aside,” Giorgetti said, underscoring that “It's left unaddressed because it's not a priority for anyone.” (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 18 June 2025<sup>1</sup>).

For years, demographic analyses have pointed to an inexorable population decline in Italy, which has one of the lowest birth rates in the world. If the current birth rate trend continues, today's population of 58.8 million (data from early 2024) is projected to fall to 53.2 million by 2054 and 44.7 million by 2074. In other words, in just 50 years the population size might be what it was in 1940. This was the subject of an earlier editorial in *Salute e Sviluppo* (no. 88, February 2024) entitled “*Only Africa Will Save Us*”. Indeed, Africa has the fastest-growing, youngest population of any continent, one teeming with energy and resources – just what Italy needs to save it from its own depopulation and decline. Echoing this fact, *Corriere della Sera* recently wrote<sup>2</sup>, “*How many migrants would Italy need to save jobs, healthcare and our country's GDP? More than 13.5 million by 2050.*”

Certain actors in our political system decry such propositions as “ethnic replacement”, a sort of “absolute evil”. For all his informed and concerned avowals, Minister Giorgetti is among them, and the government he serves has done far worse than just “putting aside” our depopulation predicament. It has established stringent and burdensome immigration policies, made even harsher by a 2023 migrant decree – the so-called Cutro decree – that calls for zero reception and integration and authorizes even longer periods of detention in Italy's notorious *Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio* (CPRs) and deportation.

The Italian Society for Migration Medicine (SIMM) has sounded the alarm on these so-called migrant repatriation centers, which have also been set up in Albania, due to growing evidence of their poor conditions of hygiene and sanitation as well as the physical and mental suffering and neglect of detainees, many of whom have self-inflicted injuries or have been the victims of violence by others. SIMM has appealed to the National Federation of Doctors and Surgeons (FNOMCeO) “to close the CPRs immediately; to launch a European-level debate over the abolition of administrative detention, given that they are pathogenic places that violate the fundamental rights of migrants and put their health and lives at risk; and to declare that no health professional operating in accordance with Article 32 of the Italian Constitution and the Code of Medical Ethics can provide, or be required to provide, services in connection with the operation of such facilities either inside or outside of Italy (for example, by signing assessments at the request of the police that an individual may suitably be detained in a CPR), as they lack essential safeguards for detainees and are contrary to the professional ethics of care. FNOMCeO has issued a similar statement on the unacceptability of using healthcare personnel to determine which migrants can be sent detention centers in Albania.”

Italy therefore seems schizophrenic when it comes to the issue of immigration: despite acknowledgment that our country needs migrants, the focus is all on keeping unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers out, harshly treating those who get in, and erecting hurdles for those already here and no danger to society who want to legalize their status. In addition, those who come through legal channels encounter scant investment and difficulty in acquiring Italian citizenship – as if there were an invisible line drawn between migrants and “patria”. In short, it's convenient to use migrants, but we don't really want them.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> N. Cottone, Giorgetti: spopolamento drammatico, politica accantona il tema, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 18 giugno 2025.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.corriere.it/economia/lavoro/25\\_giugno\\_16/quant-immigrati-servono-all-italia-per-salvare-lavoro-sanita-e-pil-oltre-13-5-milioni-entro-il-2050-9ad23a4f-235a-4b99-87d9-def5a64d9x1k.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/economia/lavoro/25_giugno_16/quant-immigrati-servono-all-italia-per-salvare-lavoro-sanita-e-pil-oltre-13-5-milioni-entro-il-2050-9ad23a4f-235a-4b99-87d9-def5a64d9x1k.shtml)