

National Focal Point - Italy

**Analytical study on discrimination and racist
violence in Italy: 2000-2002**

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Table of contents

1. Executive summary	4
2. Introduction	5
3. A brief overview of the political and cultural situation in Italy	6
4. Theoretical and methodological approach for analysing data.....	9
a. Theoretical approach.....	9
b. Methodological approach.....	10
5. Description of data and sources.....	12
6. Turning data into information	15
7. Analysis: explaining the findings, their causes and consequences	25
8. Conclusion	31
Bibliography.....	33

1. Executive summary

Our study is based on the assumption that “races” do not exist but rather human groups who are “racialised”, that is to say, socially considered on the same level as races. Any group can be racialised, despite the existence of objective phenotypical differences and even when there are no important cultural differences, as we learn from the long history of antisemitism. This is the reason why we prefer to speak of *racist* rather than “racial” discrimination and violence.

From the sources examined we obtained a large variety of quantitative data (the incidence of racist violence, etc.) and qualitative data (registration of episodes of discrimination and racist violence), which we selected through a grid which records phenomena of different kinds. The list of cases we are presenting is subdivided into two main categories, *acts of discrimination* and *racist crimes*, which in their turn are divided into further subcategories concerning the context in which the discrimination took place and the gravity of the racist crime.

The subjects and groups most exposed to discrimination and racist violence seem to us to be: foreign citizens from third world countries; the Romanies and Sinties, non-EU Muslim citizens or those considered as such. The areas and social places where discrimination and racist violence take place vary considerably: at work, at home, in state schools, welfare services and public services, on the roads... The offenders are equally varied: they include also civil servants and policemen. We consider the phenomena we defined as “institutional discrimination” and “institutional racism” as being particularly serious.

The cases we mentioned and analysed cannot be considered an expression of “common isolated citizens”; they are also the product of increasing intolerance towards migrants and gypsies which is encouraged and exploited by some media, political groups and institutions, who exploit them as scapegoats for a series of social problems – deterioration of poorer districts, microcriminality, lack of urban safety, etc. – which are, on the other hand, due to causes independent of immigration. Moreover, these acts of discrimination do not seem to be occasional cases, but rather a systematic and structural record of the Italian situation. This can be proved by the fact that a great number can be included in the category of “institutional discrimination”.

The political and cultural situation in Italy is distinguished by: a certain inadequacy in the policies of social integration, protection and extension of the rights of migrants, of refugees and minority groups; the dramatic increase of immigration; an insistent propaganda on the “invasion”, immigration as a source of insecurity for Italian citizens, “clandestinity” as a synonym of criminality; by a worsening situation created by the “Bossi-Fini” law recently approved by the Italian parliament (this law is deeply xenophobic and rigid as the residence permit, which is now called “contract of stay” and its duration are strictly dependent on the working contract); by the increase of the influence of openly xenophobic parties now part of the government (the Northern League) and extreme right or openly neo-nazi groups.

Against this alarming background, there are also many groups in Italian society who carry out an efficient and militant opposition to discrimination and racism, whose activity deserves encouragement and support.

2. Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyse the cases of discrimination and *racist*¹ violence (both symbolic and physical: from insults to murders), which took place in Italy in the two years from 2000-2002. The aim is to give an outline of a realistic picture of the situation on the subject and suggest methods to prevent and oppose these phenomena.

The analysis employs a solid theoretical approach and a vast scientific bibliography. It is based on quantitative and qualitative data drawn from varied sources. The core of our study consists of a vast number of cases taken from reports, press, information, research. We felt it worthwhile to dedicate attention and importance to the cases selected, subdivided into categories and explained, because we feel that they describe more efficiently than mere statistics the importance and complexity of the phenomena.

The awareness of the entity and variety of the forms of discrimination (also institutional) and the diffusion of xenophobia and racism, which assume also forms of aggression and murder, lead us to believe that it is not a marginal and passing phenomenon, but rather a somewhat structural element of the present political and cultural Italian situation.

¹ In paragraph 4 relative to the theoretical and methodological approach, we explain why we use the adjective *racist* instead of “*racial*”.

3. A brief overview of the political and cultural situation in Italy

This extensive analytical study of the cases of discrimination and racist violence that we are presenting here gives a picture which it is by no means exaggerated to call alarming. In order to understand the meaning and the numerous causes, it would be useful to examine these cases in the context of the Italian political and cultural situation of which we can only describe a few aspects here.

Although the immigration process has been taking place for almost thirty years, Italy has only just begun to understand that it is a country of immigration rather than of emigration. This belated awareness and the constant underestimation of the phenomenon considered by the majority (or as a form of wishful thinking) as transitory and passing, prevented immigration from being “taken seriously” for a long period of time and from adopting policies of social integration, protection and extension of rights to migrants, refugees and minorities. For example, in Italy the right to vote even in local elections has been denied to non-EU citizens and gypsies. This contributes to making them more exposed to discrimination and racist violence.

From this underestimation Italy experienced, in a period of fifteen years, a progressive worsening of the phenomenon: the subjects of the “invasion”, of immigration as a cause of insecurity to Italian citizens, of “clandestinity” as synonymous to criminality have become a trump card to use at election time, fully exploited by right-wing parties, but sometimes also contended by moderate left-wing parties. It was in this political background with the centre-left in government that the so-called “Turco-Napolitano”² law was drawn up and approved, a “general” law, as it aimed at regulating the multiple aspects of immigration and the status and condition of migrants. This law includes several highly debatable, even discriminatory regulations - it should be remembered for example, that with the creation of the so-called temporary hosting centres, it establishes for the first time in the history of the republic, the administrative and extra-judicial detention of a certain category of citizens. However, it contains a series of useful legal provisions against discrimination, especially articles 43 and 44³. The aforementioned law, however, as authoritative experts have sustained, has been applied more frequently for its repressive aspects than for the regulations aiming at defending the rights of migrants from discrimination and racism. These regulations (together with other provisions of the law such as the “Mancino Law”) should instead be applied and enforced in order to limit the widespread tendency of discriminating and aggressive attitudes towards migrants and minority groups.

Compared to this law, the series of regulations included in the “Bossi-Fini” law, recently approved by the Italian parliament, is a clear worsening or even a step backwards. This law already in force, makes the residence permit (specifically defined as “contract of stay”) and its duration strictly dependent on the working contract. The citizen from a third world country can enter Italy only if he has a regular long-term working contract; if he loses his job and does not find another within 6 months, he can be expelled; those who are found without a valid stay permit run the risk of a long term in prison. Moreover, the “Bossi-Fini” law, drastically reduces the cases where it is possible to obtain family reunion and doubles the duration of the “detention” of migrants in temporary hosting centres. Fortunately, it does not repeal the antidiscrimination regulations contained in the preceding law.

Among the “unpublished” laws passed by the present government should be mentioned the recent approval of “fingerprints”, that is, the control of identity through fingerprints, a measure imposed

² “Single Act on the provisions concerning immigration and regulations on conditions for foreigners”. Law decree 286/98. Available on the web site: <http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/98286dl.htm> (16.09.02).

³ Paragraph 12 of art. 40 of Law 286/98 assigns the competence of establishing centres of observation, information and legal assistance for victims of discrimination and racist violence to the Regions. This paragraph has never been enforced.

only on foreign citizens coming from third world countries. This regulation is a serious form of discrimination which contributes towards increasing a specific prejudice, already widespread in public opinion and in the collective imagery, one that associates immigration with deviance and criminality.

All this takes place in an atmosphere inflamed by the insistent instigation to discrimination, xenophobia and racism especially by the Northern League, by its government representatives in office, by its leaders and the members of the local governments⁴. Exaggerated and emphasised by a section of the media, the declarations and actions of the League against migrants, refugees, gypsies, homosexuals, have now become a daily venom which keeps public opinion alive, and against which the reactions of the opposing political forces and the community are rather weak and inadequate. Even when the xenophobic politicians, their supporting press⁵, the coalition government they belong to, make speeches, take action, approve measures, are unmistakably racist⁶, and there is no longer the same indignation as that which was aroused by the rise to power of the xenophobic Austrian leader Jorge Haider. We should add that the contents of the Northern League policy repeat the themes and the categories of the most traditional racism: the defence of the stock, the purity of the race, the necessity of non contamination, an explicit incitement to lynching... If we take into consideration the fact that it is a political force belonging to the government coalition, that administers a large number of municipalities in the north of Italy, that occupies key positions in government institutions – and is also willing to make alliances, at a local level, with neo-nazi groups – we can understand how all this contributes towards instigating xenophobia and racism.

However, the Northern League is only the most explicit expression of a deep hostility towards migrants, refugees, gypsies and other minority groups, that is widespread both among the political forces and in vast sectors of public opinion⁷. Most of the Italian political world is incapable of understanding that in a society where there are population groups which have no rights or have clearly different rights, even if they have been regular residents for a long time, democracy itself and even coexistence are in danger⁸.

Besides the excessive racism of the Northern League and the neo-fascist and neo-nazi groups, there are more subtle and threatening forms of discrimination and racism in Italy. Some political openly

⁴ The cases of discrimination or instigation to xenophobia and racism by members of the Northern League are so numerous that we had to put them in a specific sub-category, even though they had been drastically selected, in order to include them in our study (see paragraph 6).

⁵ When about 1000 refugees landed in Catania on the 19th March 2002, “La Padania”, the official newspaper of the Northern League printed the headlines: *The Horde*. It also encouraged people to “defend themselves with every means at their disposal from the invasion threatening our ethnic and cultural identity”. It reproached the media therefore influencing public opinion by showing “heart-breaking” scenes of children without pointing out that “together with the children there can also be people who then rob their villas, push drugs, organise prostitution, not to mention terrorists coming from the Islamic movements”. The article is available on the website:

<http://www.lapadania.com/2002/marzo/19/destra19032002.htm> (16.09.02). Similarly, on his return from an “inspection” of a refugee camp in Bari-Palese, the Northern League MP Monti declared that “this has nothing to do with refugees: it is a *horde*”.

⁶ We only have to mention the recent declaration of the Mayor of Treviso concerning the necessity to defend the purity of the “Piave race” (see article of La Repubblica: <http://www.repubblica.it/online/cronaca/immitreviso/gentilini/gentilini.html> 16.09.02) and the measures taken by some regional governments to increase the “Italic race”.

⁷ A symbolic expression of this hostility is represented by the pamphlet, *Anger and Pride*, written by an Italian journalist, Oriana Fallaci, and published for the first time by “Corriere della Sera”, the most important Italian daily. The migrants are here represented as thieves, rapists and prostitutes, who “urinate in baptistries and breed like rabbits”. Although this appears as an instigation to racial hatred, it has been publicly praised by many public personalities, including the Minister of Fine Arts in office in the present government. The journalist has not received any legal suit for libel in Italy, whereas she has been sued in France by an anti-racist association. The complete text of the article can be found on the website: <http://www.geocities.com/centrotobagi/fallaci.html> (16.09.02).

⁸ We should remember that in Italy non-EU foreigners have no right to vote, not even at local elections; the law in force is *jus sanguinis* (citizens born in Italy from foreign parents even if resident over a long period of time, are not Italian citizens); in other words to obtain Italian nationality, as a concession of the President of the Republic, is extremely difficult for non-EU members.

xenophobic forces and sectors of public opinion influenced by them encourage people to drive migrants out of the country, but a very widespread opinion represented by political areas of neo-liberal inspiration seem to consider these migrants as *nonpersons* whose only destiny is to sell their own labour force at the lowest price possible and in the most servile or semi-servile conditions.

Lastly, in Italy today the most efficient means of stemming the expansion of xenophobia and racism seems to be an extensive and well coordinated network of associations aiming at the defence of the rights of migrants, refugees and gypsies. These associations are widespread and very active and have succeeded in promoting the emergence and self-defence of the victims of discrimination and intolerance. Some of the organisations and situations going against this stream are the following: the work of opposing discrimination and racist violence and the organisation of immigrant workers carried out by the unions, especially the CGIL; the projects and initiatives of integrating foreign children and teenagers carried out in the state school system; anti-discrimination policies for the social integration of migrants and the promotion of their rights implemented by a large number of Italian local governments, the most outstanding being the Municipality of Venice.

4. Theoretical and methodological approach for analysing data

a. Theoretical approach

The basic idea that governed the drawing up of this analytical study is inspired by a fundamental theory proposed by historians, sociologists and anthropologists (see bibliography): with all its variations (colonial racism, antisemitism, sexism, nationalistic racism, discrimination, xenophobia) racist ideology is based on a unitary ideological principle: or the transcription in naturalistic terms of the historical identities, their *naturalisation*⁹. In this way, the conflicts and social contradictions themselves are expressed in naturalistic terms; and the discrimination and domination are justified as “natural”: what is happening is what the sociologist Colette Guillaumin defined as the “biologization of the social”¹⁰.

Usually we think that racism is caused by the existence of human groups phenotypically different from *Us*, which identifies itself with the rejection and discrimination of “races” different from ours, that is human groups distinguished by different visible somatic features or, at any rate, by an *essence* (morphological, religious or cultural) that makes them different from *Us*. In reality, “races” do not exist, but rather human groups that are “racialised”, that is, socially considered on the same level as races. Anyone and any group can be racialised, despite the existence of objective phenotypical differences, and even when there are no great differences in culture as we know from the long history of antisemitism¹¹.

This explains the reason why we prefer to speak of *racist* discrimination and violence rather than “racial” ones in the present study. Indeed, the subject of discrimination and violence is not about “races” or people of “different races” but individuals and minority groups who generally occupy the lower ranks of the social ladder: today, in Italy, the Albanians and the Gypsies, the Senegalese and the Romanians are all potential or real subjects of discrimination and racism.

Moreover, to fight against racism, it is not enough to state that races have no scientific basis: however unfounded the notion of “race” (and/or the ideology underlying it) acts as a social representation and continues to be used in the language and in the daily practice¹².

In other words, the *speeches, actions and discriminatory practices* are often derived from an explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious ideology, according to which certain minority groups and individuals who either belong or are thought to belong to them are supposed to be different from *Us*, both *intrinsically* and *definitively*. We should stress that the discriminatory speeches, acts and practices do not necessarily end in racism, but they undoubtedly contribute to encouraging it in an indirect way: that is when, owing to widespread xenophobia in the society and institutions, they add up and are so common that they become “normal” ways of relating with migrants and minority groups. They increase negative images of others which, in turn, generate or consolidate racism. It is not enough to condemn the discriminatory or racist speeches, acts and practices as despicable behaviour. The social analysis must try to explain why and how some sectors, individuals and most national institutions create these images of others and make them part of their speeches and social practices. Furthermore, it should try to propose strategies to show how and in which vulnerable points it is possible to stop this vicious circle of xenophobia and racism.

⁹ Bugio, A., 2001, *La guerra delle razze*, Roma, Manifestolibri

¹⁰ Guillaumin, C, 1972, *L'ideologie raciste*

¹¹ Gallissot, R., Dilani, M., Rivera, A., 2001, *L'imbroglione etnico, in quattordici parole-chiave*, Bari, Dedalo.

¹² Gallissot, R., Dilani, M., Rivera, A., 2001, *ibid.*

b. Methodological approach

To facilitate the reading and comprehension of the selected cases presented here, we have divided them into two major categories, *acts of discrimination* and *racist crimes*, which, in turn, have been divided into several sub-categories according to the themes. We are, nevertheless, aware of the overlap between one kind of discrimination and another and hence of the difficulty of establishing the typology into which they should be classified.

As far as the category of acts of discrimination are concerned, according to some experts among whom M. Wiewiorka¹³, they correspond mainly to a logic of *hierarchisation* (whereas the forms of prejudice and segregation correspond to a logic of *differentiation*). These acts are practised in many sectors of social life (school, health service, house hunting, application of the laws, methods employed by the police force, labour market, etc.). They can emerge on the media (television, cinema, publicity) and in the ways in which migrants and minority groups are misrepresented or presented negatively in speeches and practices. This type of act, however, is not always expressed illegally and therefore considered an unlawful offence¹⁴. Consequently, in cases when a democratic society should prevent, forbid, hinder with the law, expressions of xenophobia and racism, what actually happens in democratic systems are more or less disguised forms of *institutional racism*. At times the discrimination is even incorporated in the laws themselves and in the legal mechanisms. One of the most evident examples is enough: law No. 40 known as the “Turco-Napolitano” contains, on the one hand, a series of norms against discrimination and, on the other, creates a clear discrimination by stating that there is a certain category of persons, migrants to whom one cannot apply the universal principle of *habeas corpus*: the CPT (Temporary hosting centres) breach this principle and the Italian Constitution.

Even if we state beforehand that “to the extent that it is a negation of the victim, an alteration of mankind, racism is always a violence”¹⁵, in cases when it is expressed with contempt, prejudice or hatred, we have defined it as a form of *verbal* or *symbolic* violence. It has not always been easy to ascertain and distinguish if an act of violence defined as racist is really such; and it is not a matter of course that an act of violence or murder has a racist motivation only because the victim belongs to a specific race.

If the racist type of violence is so diluted as to appear to be the expression of isolated individual acts, then it could belong to a context which makes it acceptable or even legitimate to the eyes of the offender.

As far as the empirical part of our study is concerned, after preliminary examination through the Internet and our personal acquaintances, we later came into contact (via e-mail, telephone, personally) with the associations and anti-racist observatories present in Italy.

As is confirmed among other documents in the *Second report on the integration of immigrants in Italy*¹⁶, generally speaking there is an enormous difficulty of creating a reliable and complete picture of the discriminatory and racist acts and practices due to the lack of systematic surveys of the phenomenon carried out with uniform criteria throughout the national territory.

In spite of the difficulty of obtaining information, we succeeded in producing the present analytical study based on a certain number of newspaper articles, reports and local documents, and in some cases also with on-site verifications. The data collected was not uniform both for the geographic areas and the themes considered, and were collated in a general and more complex framework. After having drawn up a sort of map of the data at our disposal, we went on to a systematic, detailed analysis of the general, local and national situations.

¹³ Wiewiorka, M., 2001, *Il razzismo*, Laterza, Bari-Roma

¹⁴ Wiewiorka, M., *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.51.

¹⁶ Zincone, G. (edited by) (2001), *Secondo rapporto sull'integrazione degli immigrati in Italia*, Commissione per le politiche di integrazione degli immigrati, Milan: Il Mulino. Available on the website: <http://www.minwelfare.it/main/Areaimmigrazione/>, (03.07.2002).

As for the analysis of the newspaper articles, we tried to obtain a detailed case history of the most important episodes (or at least of those considered noteworthy by the press). By the cross-reading and analysis of the reports and newspaper articles we obtained a very alarming picture of the Italian situation concerning the diffusion of discrimination, xenophobia and racism.

5. Description of data and sources

For this analytical study we employed a solid theoretical system (see bibliography enclosed here) on which we based our empirical investigation. We used both direct and on-site information, questioning numerous authoritative experts in the field, both for data processed in some reports of research carried out in Italy by observers, monitoring centres and associations dealing with the struggle against discrimination and racist and xenophobic violence.

The unusual aspect of this work consists not so much in presenting the results obtained from local investigations, and then united in a national perspective, but rather in the choice of letting the different episodes of discrimination and racism speak for themselves.

Briefly, we decided to put our study on a solid empirical basis consisting of a carefully chosen group of *typical cases*, gathered according to different types of discrimination and violence (as explained in paragraph 4): in their defenceless daily occurrence, they represent the experience of many migrants, even though they are mostly ignored. Among the various sources we have used, we are reporting here some of them in greater detail:

- CESTIM-MLAL Verona, *Project “Schengen Green Number... a telephone call against discrimination”*, 2000¹⁷: monitoring of discriminating racist and xenophobic behaviour through calls from victims and witnesses, press articles, the policies of local councils and institutions, an analysis of individual events, through a case history obtained from 74 episodes taken in the period March-October 2000.
- Emergency network against racism – Turin, *Annual report 2000*¹⁸: within the project “*Housing, employment, education: action for equality*”, the aim is to analyse the forms of discrimination against immigrants and, more generally, against foreign citizens in Turin, in three fundamental fields: housing, employment and university education. The documentation, the product of an accurate monitoring, is vast and well analysed.
- Michele Sorice (edited by), *One a day. Acts of violence against foreigners in Italy*, Faculty of Communication Science-University of Rome “La Sapienza”, 2000¹⁹: the research, promoted by Luigi Manconi and carried out by the “Observatory on social communication”, directed by Michele Sorice, has recorded the episodes of xenophobic aggressiveness against foreigners in Italy through an analysis of the daily “press reviews” of 19 national and local newspapers between January and October 2000.
- ARES (edited by), *The colour of the houses. First report on the housing of immigrants in Italy*, 2000²⁰: the report deals with the problem of accommodation for immigrants, by analysing and summarising all the research carried out by study centres, research organisations and associations on the subject, with special attention to cases of every day discrimination and exclusion of foreigners searching for accommodation.

¹⁷ Available on the website: <http://www.cestim.it/cestim/rapporto-finale.zip>, (03.07.2002).

¹⁸ Available on the website: <http://www.unimondo.org/reteurg/index.html>, (03.07.2002).

¹⁹ Available on the website: <http://www.cestim.it/09razzismo-manconi.htm>, (03.07.2002).

²⁰ Available on the website: <http://www.sunia.it/files/rappares.html>, (03.07.2002).

²¹ Available on the website: <http://www.errc.org/publications/indices/italy.shtml>, (03.07.2002).

²² Available on the website: <http://www.savethechildren.it/pubblicazioni/pubblicazioni.html>, (03.07.2002).

²³ Available on the website: <http://www.minwelfare.it/main/Areaimmigrazione/>, (03.07.2002).

- ERRC (European Roma Rights Centre), *The country of gypsy-camps. The racial segregation of Romanies in Italy*, in “International Reports”, No. 9, October 2000²¹: the report briefly describes long-term monitoring over several years, in Italy, in various “gypsy camp-sites” with a large number of significant episodes of discriminating practices, abuses and racist and xenophobic violence experienced by Romanies and Sinties and directly recorded by observers of the Centre (from illegal raids in the camp-sites to police abuses, violence and discriminating acts by institutional representatives and others).
- Save the children Italy, “*The rights of children: invisible or forgotten? The racial discrimination of minors in Italy*”, summary, 11/2000²²: the report examines the phenomenon of the racial discrimination of minors in schools, in their relations with the law and with the system of hosting newcomers, making suggestions on how institutions and society can contribute towards removing it.
- Giovanna Zincone (edited by), *Second report on the integration of immigrants in Italy*, Commission for the integration policies of immigrants, Il Mulino, Milan 2001²³: we considered it our duty to examine more carefully chapters 3.2 (“Discrimination and racism”) and 3.4 (“The fears of others”) of the entire report. These chapters underline the results obtained by a number of researchers, supported with EU funds and carried out by national non-profit making organisations (ONLUS), on acts of discrimination and racism monitored in different areas in Italy and in different sectors.
- ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance), *Second Report on Italy*. 2001²⁴: in this report, after having presented a general picture of the Italian situation on the different forms of discrimination and racism, ECRI proposes a number of recommendations to the Italian authorities so that they take the necessary measures through their institutions in areas requiring urgent interventions against racism and xenophobia, recommending special attention to be given to certain fields (groups particularly exposed to racist violence, such as gypsies, and against forms of “institutional racism”).
- European project CODELFI-IRES, *Fighting the discrimination of migrant women*, 2001²⁵: one of the rare studies about migrants that aimed at examining and dedicating itself entirely to the problems concerning gender differences, due to the dual discrimination, of racism and sexism, which foreign women are subject to. Talks and interviews were held with immigrant women in different cities in Italy where a large number of cases of discrimination have been described.
- Permanent observatory of the Social Forum of Rome on racism and xenophobia, *Antiracist Dossier No. 1/2002 and No. 2/2002*: the former deals with disturbing signs of religious discrimination and the criminalisation of the Muslim religion in Italy after the 11th of September 2001; the latter aims at condemning the clearing of immigrants from residential urban areas and the inadequate answers by the institutions to the landing of refugees.
- Walter Peruzzi (edited by), “*Isn’t this racism? A small unauthorised anthology of the Northern League propaganda*”, magazine “Guerre & Pace” (War and Peace), 6/2002, independent

²⁴ Available on the website: http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country_approach/Italy/default.asp#TopOfPage, (03.07.2002).

²⁵ Available on the website: <http://www.ires.it/pubimmigr.htm>, (03.07.2002).

press²⁶: a press review - taken from “La Padania”, the party newspaper of the Northern League – whose aim is to condemn a serious threat, frequently underestimated, of civil coexistence: the obsessive propaganda against immigrants by the Northern League, with frequently violent tones and declarations, which very often verge on the instigation to racial hatred and discrimination or even on xenophobic aggression both verbal and physical. The ideology and themes of this propaganda have contributed towards inspiring the new immigration law known as “Bossi-Fini”, recently approved by the Italian parliament, which according to authoritative Italian and foreign observers, contains discriminatory or even outright racist provisions and measures.

- CESTIM Verona (edited by), *Racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia in Italy*, press report for 2000, 2001 and 2002²⁷: a large collection of news articles concerning the most significant episodes of racism, taken from two national daily papers “Il Manifesto” and “La Repubblica”.
- Giuseppe Faso, “Africa Insieme” Toscana (edited by). *The social making of the foreigner*, press report for 2002²⁸: of the complete report, edited with great care and attention especially to “racist nuances” of “journalese”, which could in itself be considered discriminatory, we have selected the articles taken from the daily news of local and national papers (“La Nazione”, “La Padania”, “La Stampa”, “Il Corriere della Sera”, “La Repubblica”, “Il Tirreno”, “Il Messaggero”), which speak of discriminatory practices or racist violence in a more explicit way.

Lastly, we should point out that these reports, the product of the monitoring by observers and associations, however valid, reliable and complete the documentation, have been drawn up locally and therefore not nationally coordinated; as far as we know, common programmes tending to standardise and systematise data collection do not yet exist (something which is very desirable). However, it should be emphasised that at the present time, in Italy, anti-racist associations and observers, mostly voluntary, represent the most valid sources of information on the phenomenon of discrimination and racist violence.

The monitoring centres, which are mainly the product of voluntary initiatives, are distributed unevenly over the Italian territory: in this irregular picture, the most evident aspect is the absence of the South from the research area. The south of Italy is almost devoid of these structures, except for a few observatories on migration, which does not however have a systematic collection of data. Although there is no empirical data, we can say that *overtly hostile* attitudes and *acts of violence* by individuals and the local population towards migrants, refugees, gypsies and minority groups in general are slightly less widespread and frequent in the South than in the Centre and North.

To complete our information we have to state that we either did not receive many reports and data requested or they were not available (Report of the “National Observatory on racist discrimination against foreign minors” of Bologna; Report of the monitoring activity of the association “Razzismo-Stop” of Padua; Report of the monitoring of the “Veneto Observatory against racism”, etc...), mainly relating to the period 2001-2002, which once again confirms the absence of coordination between initiatives and monitoring groups, the slackness with which this information is produced, the poor distribution and dissemination of the results of the research.

²⁶ Available on the website: <http://www.mercatiesplosivi.com/guerrepac>, (03.07.2002).

²⁷ Available on the website: <http://www.cestim.it>, (03.07.2002).

²⁸ Available on the website: <http://www.africainsieme.f2s.com/>, (03.07.2002).

6. Turning data into information

The following are only the most representative cases of discrimination, aggression and racist violence occurring in the two years 2000-2002, the period considered in this analytical study. They are taken from a vast repertory of press articles and reports by observers we consulted. We were directly informed of some of the cases; they have all been submitted to verification through comparison between several sources. As we explained in paragraph 4, we thought it right to select and subdivide the case history into certain categories. This subdivision is only descriptive and aims at facilitating the reading and analysis: indeed, many of the cases reported could be included in more than one category. Lastly, the cases of discrimination are so numerous, also religious and the expression of racist opinions by politicians or public officials of the Northern League, that we considered right to include them in a specific category.

♦ ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT AND IN THE WORKPLACE

March 2000: In a firm of the province of Verona, an immigrant worker pointed out the existence of separate bathrooms for Italian and foreign workers distinguished by two labels: “for employees” and “guest workers”. The toilets reserved for “guest workers” are not as clean and have no soap or toilet paper. Formerly, there used to be a sign at the entrance of the factory reading: “Entrance forbidden to non-EU workers”. The immigrant worker that denounced this discrimination was fired on the spot. With the help of Cestim, a suit was filed for acts of discrimination against foreign citizens.

March 2001: the Neurotraumatological Institute of Grottaferrata (a hospital having an agreement with the Region of Latium) rejected the application of twenty students for a training course. All these students were immigrants from third world countries, wanting to do their training as assistants to the elderly and for terminal patients. After giving a long series of false motivations, the institute was obliged to acknowledge the real motivation: the proprietors of the institute were not in favour of “the presence of immigrants in the ward as potential carriers of disease”.

December 2001: The Senior Attorney of Bolzano applied for the closing of the proceedings against two members of the local council, for breaking the law against racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, as they had presented a motion in the provincial council against employing Muslim workers in Alto Adige after the 11th of September.

September 2002: The ‘Carabinieri’ of Arezzo arrested the son and nephew of Lidia Togni, the owner of the Circus of the same name. The two were accused of illtreating and imposing inhuman working conditions on three Indian citizens belonging to the Sikh minority. They also confiscated their passports and residence permits threatening not to return them if the three rebelled, and asking for a large sum of money in exchange for them. The three foreign workers succeeded courageously in escaping and in denouncing the event to the Carabinieri of Arezzo.

♦ ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING

April 2000: For the first time in Italy, the Courts of Milan issued a sentence ordering the payment of moral damages for an act of racial discrimination towards a citizen of the Ivory Coast, a 35-year old nurse, who was sent away by a real estate agency with the answer: “We are not going to give you any information because the owners do not want to rent their property to coloured people”.

May 2000: The owner of a real estate agency in Parma was denounced for having breached the racial equality laws and the 'Carabinieri' confiscated the discriminatory notice saying: "We do not work with coloured non-EU members". The agent defended himself saying that out of 100 forms filled in by flat owners who apply to the agency, 89 specify that they are not willing to rent to non-EU members.

May 2000: A Verona weekly published newspaper announcements offering rents specifying: "Non-EU members should not apply". They amounted to 96.

November 2001: In the province of Agrigento, following the events of the 11th of September, the residents refused to rent flats to seasonal workers from North Africa, who were regularly employed for fruit gathering. The only reason for this was that they were probably Muslims.

◆ ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES

March 2000: The Provincial Verona transport company removed the automatic food and drink dispensers and closed the public lavatories, with the aim of discouraging "immigrants, gypsies and undesirable people from hanging around the station".

March 2002: The leader of Alleanza Nazionale (the extreme right-wing party of the coalition government), Ventriglia, in the Municipality of Turin refused to marry the couples of mixed races who went to the Municipality for the celebration, giving the motivation that some of the future spouses did not have residence permits.

July 2002: The firm Elettrocasa of Treviso was condemned by the Court of Trento for discriminatory behaviour against a citizen of Algeria, to whom they had not granted the benefits stated in the publicity campaign for the purchase of a computer.

◆ ACTS OF RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

October 2001: In Bologna, the bus driver of the municipal lines refused to let a woman get on with her daughter, closing the door of the bus in her face, with the excuse that she was wearing the "Islamic veil" (in reality a simple scarf). The woman, an Italian citizen from Maghreb, denounced him.

June 2002: "In order to dissolve the Islamic party and not to grant the 8th part per thousand of the tax returns to Muslims": the petition promoted by Silvia Ferretto, a regional councillor of Alleanza Nazionale, collected 720 signatures in Milan. Mrs Ferretto left the following declaration: "We are not arguing about the freedom of religion, but about using religion to impose laws. In actual fact, the Koran contains terrible declarations, inciting people to violence and racial and religious intolerance, to theocracy and the discrimination between men and women".

◆ ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION AND AGGRESSION AGAINST MINORS

October 2000: The Juvenile Court in Ancona declared that a couple was suitable for the international adoption of a foreign child, as long as he/she was not "coloured", imposing the restriction, "for those living in micro-communities, to adopt European children". The President of the Juvenile Court stated: "In a small centre the adopted child would be considered an exception in the village".

May 2001: For months, every day before going to school and during the break, a 12-year old Cingalese boy attending the third form in the middle school of the State School "Pertini" in Rome,

was surrounded by 4 school companions, humiliated for the colour of his skin and beaten. This was followed by another episode: six of them turned up in front of the school with knives and broken glass bottles with boys from the area with whom they had organised the aggression against “the negro and his friends”: they kidnapped them, took them to a park and bashed them up. The thugs were boys from 15 to 17 years of age.

October 2001: In Vigevano, a 14-year old son of Moroccan parents was attacked by two companions in front of the technical high school he attended. Nobody did anything while the two hit and punched him, shouting insults: “You’re like Bin Laden; just like him. Go back to your own country, you sh... Muslim”.

January 2002: AIBI (Friends of Children Association) presented a denunciation for racism against the Juvenile Court of Florence: two adoptions were authorised for a child “from 3 to 5 years of age, of European origin and handicap free” and for a “white child from 0 to 3 years of age handicap free”.

March 2002: The municipal kindergartens in Milan are not open to children of immigrants without residence permits. Enrolments are accepted with a “reservation”, that can be removed only when “the applicants have complied with the law”. This is the statement that the councillor of education in the local government headed by Albertini made, adding: “because we have to prevent illegal immigrants from obtaining more benefits than others, meaning that, if we accept irregulars we have to leave someone else out, for example the Milanese”.

♦ **DISCRIMINATORY DECLARATIONS AND ACTS: FORMS OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM**

March 2000: During the removal of two gypsy camps in Rome, carried out by the Municipality and the Police, and imposed using excessively harsh methods, the municipal bulldozers razed the camp of Tor de’ Cenci to the ground destroying the artefacts, objects and documents of the gypsy property. After the operation 56 Muslim-Bosnian gypsies were deported to Bosnia, to a war zone. Among them were 33 minors including 15 born in Italy and one in France, a 16-year old mother with an infant, a pregnant girl, a disabled little girl and at least two minors forcefully taken away from their families. The operation was carried out with methods breaching Italian laws, international conventions and EU regulations.

April 2000: “Strict Control” Operation by ATM (Milan Transport company): every morning the controllers, backed by private wardens, oblige only the foreigners to get off the buses on to the pavement for a general control of tickets and documents, often asking them to present also their residence permits. These scenes increase during the night, when they are accompanied with verbal insults, pulling and pushing. All this has occurred ever since the ATM firm has decided that normal controllers, now called ‘discouragers’, should be accompanied by 54 private wardens.

May 2000: Frigerio, mayor of Cernusco sul Naviglio (Milan), made the following public declaration: he would pay 5 million lire taken from the municipal budget to a farm labourer to spread sewage in an area inside the city where a group of gypsies had temporarily parked their caravans. According to the mayor, “it is the only way to get your own back on the gypsies, an act of justice, seeing what they leave behind before going away”.

May 2000: The Friuli Region installed air-radar to intercept illegals. This new “security” tool proposed by the Northern League with the consent of the entire coalition and approved by the Regional government, will back patrols, closed circuit cameras and powerful spotlights.

May 2000: In the dead of night in Rome, more than 1000 people including the municipal police, Carabinieri and the army burst into the gypsy camps of Arco di Travertino, Muratella, Via Candoni-ATAC, Rustica and Vasca Navale. The police forces arrived in the gypsy camps in anti-riot uniforms, with guns and batons, on armoured vans, accompanied by ambulances, breakdown vans and bulldozers. Once inside the camps, they ordered people to come out of their caravans and huts, promising to transfer them elsewhere. Some caravans were removed with the breakdown vans and even with the proprietors still inside. After the operations, the police closed all the roads within a radius of one kilometre around the camps. All this took place on a day when the Italian journalists went on strike. The councillor for “gypsy affairs”, Lusi, sent by Mayor Rutelli (coalition of the Ulivo together with the new-founded Communist Party, Rifondazione Comunista) present at the event, declared that “this is a simple and legal operation to give these people a better place to live in”, but added contradicting himself that it all took place in the dead of night without any warning, because “when you have to deal with criminals you have to act secretly not to let them escape”. And he concluded: “The Municipality of Rome confirms its battle against criminality and delinquency. We have chased away the criminals.”

June 2000: The Mayor of Treviso, Gentilini, (Northern League) was acquitted from the accusation of instigation to racial hatred. He had been accused of having declared: “We should make the non-EU members wear fancy dress to look like hares, so that the guns of the hunters could practice, and... pim, pum, pam”. The judge acquitted him because “no crime exists”.

September 2000: The Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Biffi, sent a “pastoral letter” in which he encouraged the “entrance of catholic immigrants to preserve the identity of the nation”, because the followers of Islam, with their “fundamentalism” are a threat to “western civilisation”. From the columns of the weekly *L'Espresso* (28th September 2000), Giovanni Sartori, the famous politologist and advisor of the Ulivo coalition agrees with the proposal of the Cardinal and “welcomes his intelligent faith”, praising “the ethics of responsibility”.

December 2000: The Friuli Region accepted and approved a proposal of the Northern League offering economic incentives to the “Padane” women who give birth to “Padani” children inside “the sacred bond of marriage”.

May 2001: For the first time, a football club, the Lazio, denounced some of their own supporters for an “anti-Romanist” banner that appeared on the terraces during the derby: “Team of niggers, terraces of Jews”. The football field was immediately disqualified for racism.

September 2001: The national and international media reported the declarations of the Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, on the presumed “superiority of the western civilisation” compared to that of Islam at the end of the meeting in Berlin with Chancellor Schroeder.

October 2001: After landing in Sicily, the hands of forty-one Sudanese refugees, were “branded” with a number written with a felt-pen by the Police. This is an act against the dignity of the person which cannot be justified on the basis of the necessity for control and prevention.

January 2002: In Rome, in the Esquilino district and other districts inhabited by immigrants, but also in other Italian cities, round-ups were carried out repeatedly road by road, with raids and searches at dawn in flats and in gypsy camps, without any warrants and without any motivation, except for a “control of documents”. Hundreds of people rounded up were dragged into vans and transferred to the Police station, without any possibility of bringing their personal belongings with them and without any protection of their privacy. The Police controls in the roads increased in such a way (a vast employment of men and means, indiscriminate arrests and transfer to the police

station), to the point of creating social alarm against foreigners and breaking the norms protecting the discriminatory behaviour towards them.

July 2002: The Carabinieri of Locorotondo broke into the homes of several members of the sports and cultural association “Dioubo” in Modugno (Bari), at the dead of night, with the excuse of looking for “illegal immigrants”. The Carabinieri performed searches without giving any explanations, they took photographs of their lodgings and identified the inhabitants. The tenants with regular contracts and residence permits were arrested. This is the second episode of the kind in the course of two months causing offence to the Senegalese themselves.

August 2002: Following the visit of two members of Parliament of the PRC (New-founded Communist Party) at the Hosting Centre of Lampedusa, the methods of detention of the so-called “clandestines” were confirmed, as denounced by the associations (no interpreters, mediators, information on the rights to asylum; impossibility of communicating with the outside world; control by the police instead of volunteers; very bad sanitary conditions; no services, limited spaces; overcrowding, etc...). The PRC denounced these conditions for the umpteenth time and urgently put the question to the government.

August 2002: Five men of the crew and the captain of a fishing boat of Porto Palo, in Sicily, were put on the register of those presumed guilty, with an unusual alleged crime, that of contributing to illegal immigration: they were “guilty” of having saved 151 immigrants, from drowning, including numerous women and children drifting on a “wreck” in the middle of the sea. Following the denouncement and confiscation of the fishing boat by the legal authorities, the crews of other fishing boats, who happen to find themselves in the same situation, now refuse to rescue people fearing the same consequences.

12th September 2002: The press reported a declaration of Minister Bossi, now in office, who said he was firmly against extending identity controls with the use of fingerprints also to Italian citizens, an instrument by the Berlusconi government and till now reserved only to third world citizens. Bossi stated: “I have no intention of putting Italian citizens on the records (...); taking their fingerprints is putting them on the records. We want democracy and freedom, not slavery”.

◆ **DISCRIMINATORY SPEECHES, ACTS AND FORMS OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM BY MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE NORTHERN LEAGUE**

April 2000: During the regional election campaign, Umberto Bossi distributed leaflets with the slogan: “If you do not want gypsies, Moroccans and delinquents in your homes, if you want to be bosses of your own homes in a liveable city, vote for the Northern League”. In Voghera, at the meeting organised by the Northern League itself and led by their member, Mario Borghezio, the participants said “the prayer of the gypsy”, which goes: “Give us at least a million a month, as the municipality doesn’t have other expenses, give us the priority of having a home, because we are nomads but we want to stay here, we do not want to be “gassed” by the people from Voghera, who are now a bit “pissed off”. The text was circulated as a leaflet. At the regional elections of 16th April 2000, the centre-right and the extreme right, including the Northern League, obtained the majority vote.

July 2000: At the end of a demonstration against drugs, organised in Turin by the “Green Shirts”, there was a fire under the bridge over the Dora river, where there is an improvised dormitory for immigrants. The charge of arson was made to a group of militants of the League, also including the Euro M.P. Borghezio.

October 2000: The Northern League promoted a protest demonstration, clearly intolerant, in Lodi against the project of building a mosque. During the demonstration in which other members of “Casa delle Libertà”, the coalition government, and members of the neo-nazi groups took part, the soil where the mosque was going to be built was desecrated by sprinkling the area with pig urine. The campaign against the building of the mosque is still going on. Some of the main supporters, together with the Northern League, are the neo-nazi groups of “Forza Nuova”.

November 2000: in Rovate, in the province of Brescia, an order of the Northern League Mayor, Vanenti, obliged “non Christians” to keep a distance of at least 15 meters away from the places of Catholic cult. The Mayor was suspended because his order was “against common sense”.

January 2001: Gentilini, the aforementioned Mayor of Treviso, in front of a Northern League crowd, insisted on “metal wagons” for “clandestines who get caught”, be they “muscular negroes” or “flower vendors with a strange olive complexion”. Instead of wagons, he stated, we should get these people to reinforce the banks of the Piave, with chains on their feet”.

February 2001: The Northern League asked for an explanation from the Municipality of Verona on working relations of a citizen from Togo, who worked as a linguistic mediator insisting on his dismissal with the motivation that he took part in “illegal” debates (in reality, organised in collaboration with the unions or associations).

September 2001: In Venice, on the day to celebrate “the Padano pride day” (now called “devolution day”) the Euro M.P. Borghezio distributed a leaflet with a photo of Bin Laden with subtitles: “clandestines = Islamic terrorists” to his “green volunteers”.

November 2001: The Mayor of the Northern League in Varese had closed circuit cameras installed outside a meeting place of Muslim prayer, in such a way as to keep the “Arab presence” under control in the area and to come to terms with citizens disturbed by the “Muslim presence”.

November 2001: The Municipality of Treviso, headed by a Northern League council dedicated to the anti-immigrant battle for a long time now, ordered the closing of a shed used as a mosque, declaring, as an excuse, that it was unsafe.

February 2002: “There is a war on, so we have to use war methods: also with a bazooka; the speedboats should be destroyed. I was the first Mayor to say that we had to shoot on the speedboats and on their wrecks. At a certain point we even have to aim directly at them, as there is a latent and covert occupation of Italy”. This has also been confirmed once again by the Mayor of Treviso, Gentilini.

February 2002: “We want the children of Padania”: is the slogan of a Northern League manifesto published on the front page of the newspaper “L’Eco di Bergamo” and is still hung on many walls in the south of Bergamo. The provincial leader of the Northern League, Colleoni, justified himself by saying that this is an encouragement to have more children, so as to perpetuate their origins and preserve their culture. As these origins are “Padane”, he added, all we can say is: “We want Padani children”. “I am white, I have blue eyes and fair hair. My brothers too. If I were coloured, I would have coloured children. But I am white and when my sperm mate with a white girl they produce white children!” And this is why the municipalities of Caravaggio and Palazzago, where the Northern League prevails, deliberated the payment of 300,000 lire to each new born “Padano” and have opened a “Padana” primary school.

July 2002: The Northern League put a motion to the Lombard regional council, inviting them to defend the “Patti Lateranensi” (referring explicitly to the pact signed by Mussolini and Pope Pius IX) which pledged itself not to grant public areas for the construction of mosques, in order to defend the superiority of Christian places of cult.

August 2002: In Treviso, 150 Carabinieri, traffic police and policemen ordered 80 Moroccan citizens to abandon some old buildings which they occupied illegally, which were then demolished with bulldozers of ATER, a company belonging to the municipality. The Moroccan citizens all with the regular residence permits and employed in factories in the area, took shelter under the arcades of the Duomo sleeping in the open air for several days. The Northern League Mayor, Gentilini, declared, on behalf of the municipal administration, that it was not his job to find lodgings for the “homeless Islamic”, that he did not want kasbahs on his territory and that he could not defend “those who pollute the purity of the Piave race”. He was backed by the director of ATER, Fanton, also a member of the League, who was charged with incitement to racial hatred, who after the eviction drank a toast to celebrate the occasion in the city. During one of the nights spent under the arcades of the church, the Moroccan families were attacked by a group of naziskins, fans of the local football team. Shouting racist insults, they threw a Molotov cocktail and a dozen empty bottles wounding several women.

◆ **RACIST CRIMES WITH PHYSICAL AND VERBAL AGGRESSION**

February 2000: In Rome, several traffic policemen, hence municipal employees, practised abuse and violence on two travelling vendors from Senegal.

May 2000: In Albiano (Turin), a Brazilian citizen working as a daily, was attacked by a young man who shouted “Dirty nigger, go home”, as soon as she got off the bus, and continued shouting insults and being nasty. Then, when the woman tried to defend herself, he kicked and slapped her, throwing a stone at her. The woman reported it to the police station: the charge was a serious offence, aggravated by racial discrimination, personal injuries and attempted duress.

November 2000: In Ventimiglia, some unknown persons painted the rolling shutters of a shop belonging to North African citizens with words encouraging the expulsion of non-EU citizens, after having damaged their van and obliged the owners to shut the business for several days.

March 2001: In a small centre in the province of Campobasso, a Senegalese citizen was threatened with heavy racist insults and physically attacked with kicks and punches by four young men.

May 2001: In Rome, on the night bus going from the centre to Ostia Lido, a citizen of Cameroon was insulted and attacked for being a black woman by three youths subsequently arrested by the police. None of the people present actively took her defence.

October 2001: In Milan and in Turin were found numerous graffiti with offensive racist insults on the walls and on the rolling shutters of shops belonging to Muslim immigrants.

January 2002: The hosting centre for foreign minors in Nettuno was attacked by about 80 young men who rushed against the building with stones and sticks shouting “Free Italy” and “Foreigners out”.

April 2002: A racist aggression occurred in Mantua hurting an 18-year old Moroccan: two Italian 20-year olds, for no apparent reason, approached him with an excuse, they insulted him saying “sh.... Nigger, bastard, fu.... Moroccan”, then they hit him and stuck a knife into his buttock.

April 2002: According to the serious charge (abuse of power, slander and duress), an officer of the Carabinieri in Florence, during a normal control at the railway station, is said to have harassed a foreign woman, smashing her mobile phone, taking away her money, railway pass and regular identity card issued by the Consulate. Moreover, he is said to have threatened the woman with retaliation if she rebelled. After this, the officer drew up a report in which he accused the woman with the offence of aggravated resistance to a public official.

May 2002: In Rome, two Italian women grabbed a Moroccan woman by her hair shouting “Stinking foreigner” by two Italian citizens. They pushed her out of a telephone booth, robbed her gold necklace and dragged her on the ground hitting her head against an iron gate. The two Italian women who took to their heels, were later arrested by the Carabinieri for robbery with violence, personal injuries and breach of the laws against racial hatred.

May 2002: In Solaro (Milan), 20 young drunkards, from 22 to 25 years of age, led by three 50-year olds with a former criminal record, attacked 15 Pakistanis praying in a religious cultural centre. They began by hitting the window panes repeatedly with bottles, shouting: “Talebans, talebans!”. When the two Pakistanis went out to see what was happening, the group began to kick and beat them. In an attempt to defend themselves, those who had remained in the centre, barred the doors but were struck with bottles and stones thrown through the windows.

May 2002: In Sanremo, an Egyptian citizen was insulted with xenophobic phrases and then attacked with kicks and punches all over their bodies by a young Italian man: the only motivation seemed to have been his hatred for non-EU members.

May 2002: In Varese, three footballers of African origin (one from Cameroon and two from Algeria) belonging to the local football team were beaten and insulted by a group of fans of the same team. The three, attacked in a parking lot in the dark by people with covered faces, were pushed around, beaten with heavy racist insults.

August 2002: In Rome, in the Esquilino district, two Italian citizens, one of whom happened to be a policeman in civilian clothing, attacked the president of the Bangladesh Association in Italy, owner of a shop in the area, in full daylight for no specific reason. The latter who had a large sum of money on him, thought they were thieves. When a group of Bangladesh citizens came to his aid, a fight took place during which two people were injured (the brother in law of the president of the association, who had been punched up, had a broken nose). The police brought the two Bangladesh citizens to the police station and released them eight hours later charging them with serious offences. This event took place immediately after another attack of the same kind against another foreign shopkeeper, but this time by two Carabinieri.

◆ **RACIST CRIMES WITH PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**

March 2000: In San Lorenzo, a district in Rome, four hooligans of the extreme right, two of whom were minors, almost caused a disaster setting fire to the public dormitory for foreigners in the district, with Molotov cocktails. After the police search in their homes, were found racist symbols and Celtic crosses. The two who were adults were accused of arson and attempted murder on racist grounds.

March 2000: In Verona, a man threw inflammable liquid at a young man from Maghreb who had been courting his daughter for some time setting him on fire; the young man was burnt on his face and arms.

May 2000: In Naples, a control by four policemen of several foreign travelling vendors ended up with the usual confiscation of goods without a report and with violent pushing around of a Senegalese who wanted to see the report. The Senegalese citizen, pushed against the car and then on the ground, was handcuffed and taken to prison; at the first aid department he was not given any period of prognosis while the police had reported at least ten days for “having been attacked by the Senegalese”.

June 2000: In Rome, two migrants from Ecuador were violently beaten by six youths from 20 to 25. After insults, intimidation, threats and extortion they started to push them, physically kicking and punching them with an iron rod. These youths were accused of extortion, robbery with violence and racial discrimination.

August 2000: In Bressanone, in a disco, a foreign citizen was beaten by a few neo-nazis who spat on his face; one week later, eight naziskins tried to attack an immigrant travelling salesman.

August 2000: In Varese, a naziskin was arrested with a charge of attempted murder with the aggravating circumstances of “racial hatred”: after having provoked and followed him, he was said to have stabbed a citizen of Sierra Leone, who was walking with his compatriots near a bar.

February 2001: Near Bolzano, at a petrol station on the A22 motor-way, nine members of the “Veneto Skinhead Front” kicked, punched and stabbed a Moroccan youth, who was with two fellow citizens and a girl from Alto Adige. The nine were arrested by the police with the charge of injuries aggravated by racial discrimination.

February 2001: In Bergamo, was discovered an anti-black nazi gang. They usually waited for the closing time of the bar when the customers left, then followed a dark-skinned person, attacked him and gave him a good hiding. During the search in the homes of the six skinheads they found swastikas, Celtic crosses, batons, racist leaflets, knuckle-dusters and a pass of Forza Nuova. From July 2000 they had beaten up at least four immigrants.

March 2001: In Florence, four young men, three Albanians and an Italian were the victims of acts of violence in the offices of the police station by policemen and the “bouncers” of the disco where they went dancing: accused of having offended the “bouncers”, they were seriously offended, hit and kicked in the belly. The aggressors did not know that one of the “four Albanians” was an Italian citizen, the son of Vannino Chiti, at that time under-secretary to the Prime Minister.

April 2002: In Florence, in front of a disco, two young Italian citizens prepared a trap for a young dark-skinned foreigner and gave him a beating hitting him with a deadly telescopic truncheon. The young man had severe personal injuries, some on the face, reputed permanent; the two Italians were denounced.

◆ **RACIST CRIMES WITH MURDER**

March 2000: At Gallarate, a 40-year old Romanian worker, Ion Cazacu died after an aggression by his employer, the owner of a small building company. After having covered him with petrol, his employer set him on fire causing extensive deep burns on 90% of his body. Cazacu had protested against the intolerable servile conditions of exploitation to which he and 20 other workers were subjected, and asked for them to be freed from the illegal job hunting system, to be legally employed and not obliged to pay the exorbitant requests for rents.

June 2000: A lawyer resident in Milan killed a young man from Ecuador, Luiz Guzman, by shooting twice at his head with a Magnum 357. The murder followed a quarrel between the lawyer and his father on one side and, on the other, a group of young people including the Ecuadorian citizen, who maybe drunk, were breaking the mirrors of cars parked beneath the homes of the two. After the young South American had fallen on the pavement in a pool of blood, the lawyer and his father ran off before the arrival of the police and the ambulance. The young man died after two operations on the brain and four and a half months of agony.

April 2001: Manslaughter and failure to offer assistance: this is the charge against three Carabinieri of Ladispoli (Rome), who were said to have killed a Tunisian citizen, Eddine Imed Bouabid, by hitting his head three times with the butt of a revolver.

June 2001: In Rimini a young Senegalese, Samba Diouf, was stabbed to death when trying to defend a baker from the attacks of four aggressive Italian boys, shouting, pushing each other and chucking pieces of bread also at the baker. Diouf's intervention arose the fury of the boys, one of whom grabbed a long knife from the counter, and hit him violently with at least 15 stabs.

May 2002: Turin, a young gypsy, Baretta Salkanovic, died after having been injured with shots from a fire arm. Salkanovic and his two presumed accomplices, after having stolen some farm equipment were going away from an illegal vegetable garden in the suburbs of the city, when all of a sudden they were approached by a man who got down from his car, shot several times at the three young men, seriously injuring two. Salkanovic hit by at least two bullets died a few days later.

7. Analysis: explaining the findings, their causes and consequences

In January 2001 was published the report of a research²⁹ promoted by L. Manconi and edited by M. Sorice, denouncing an alarming factor: in Italy once every 25 hours a foreigner undergoes an act of racist violence. As the research only considered information taken from the daily papers, we can reasonably state that the acts of racist violence were far more numerous.

Though the work of Manconi and Sorice refers only to the beginning of the period we took into consideration of the present study, the above-mentioned factor is still valid today as an efficient indicator of a social reality so covered up and underestimated as to give rise to concern. Indeed, the data available on the first nine months of 2000 show that at least 34.7% of the acts of violence on migrants is clearly xenophobic and that the phenomenon does not only refer to large cities and metropolises but also the provinces from North to South.³⁰ We based ourselves on these data and percentages relative to the initial period taken into consideration as it gives us an idea of a picture which was already alarming, but shows us that since then the situation is much worse. Besides, the acts that we define in this study as “openly xenophobic aggression”, always distinguished by the use of physical violence³¹, subtle forms of discrimination and mobbing have been on the increase for some time, together with verbal violence, an alarm signal of a less explicit and direct intolerance, but equally violent: it is as if the xenophobic aggressiveness began to take root in some way in the “ordinary” spheres of society.

Consequently the acts of physical violence are not isolated episodes by “ordinary citizens without any particular ideological bias” (as shown in a recent report of the Ministry of the Interior)³², but they are the expression of a growing intolerance by the local population towards migrants (and gypsies), an intolerance encouraged or exploited by some sectors of the media, political forces and institutions, who make them become the scapegoats of a number of social problems – deterioration of poorer districts, microcriminality, urban safety, etc. – which are instead due to causes other than immigration.

This intolerance is both encouraged, organised and instigated by members of the coalition political parties now in government, especially the Northern League, who have specifically made propaganda against the “clandestines”, Islamic followers, immigrants in general, a fundamental item on their list.

Foreign women, according to the data supplied in some reports³³, and partly found in the cases we proposed (see paragraph 6), are probably more exposed to violence amounting to almost 20% of the cases³⁴, at the top of the list of the violent acts recorded by the press (due to the fact that robbery and sexual acts of violence can be added to the specifically xenophobic acts). This figure has been confirmed by a more detailed study³⁵ relative to 2001 on an analysis of discrimination suffered by migrant women and the means of defeating it. Generally speaking, although women play an important part in the immigrant population in Italy, studies on discrimination and racist

²⁹ Observatory on social communication – University of Rome “La Sapienza” (2000). *Acts of violence against immigrants in the course of the first nine months of 2000: Analysis of 20 Italian newspapers*, available on the website: <http://www.cestim.it/09razzismo-manconi.htm>, (03.07.2002).

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Ministry of the Interior, (2002): Central Direction of the Prevention Police: *EU-European Observatory for the Monitoring on racism, xenophobia and antisemitism*-request for data, document No. 224/B1/16285.

³³ Observatory on social communication – University of Rome “La Sapienza” (2000), *ibid*; Emergency Network against racism – Turin, *Annual Report 2000*, available on the website: : <http://www.unimondo.org/reteurg/index.html>, (03.07.2002); European Project Codelfi-Ires (2001), *Fighting the discrimination against migrant women*, available on the website: <http://www.ires.it/pubimmigr.htm>, (03.07.2002).

³⁴ Observatory on Social Communication – University of Rome “La Sapienza” (2000), *ibid.*

³⁵ European Project Codelfi-Ires (2001), *Fighting the discrimination against migrant women*, *ibid.*

violence have rarely taken into consideration the dual aspect of this discrimination, racist and sexist, that women undergo both as women and as migrants. The above mentioned study is based on the hypothesis that the most important differences between immigrant men and immigrant women, as far as discrimination and racist violence is concerned, are related to the physical and sexual field, to the social roles of the two sexes, to the different position in public and private life. For example, men have to undergo more frequent unmotivated police checks on the road and in shops, and are more often stopped arbitrarily by the police forces. Instead, the women are more frequently suspected of practising prostitution, harassed with persistent “compliments”, submitted to aggression and sexual violence³⁶. This situation is almost completely covert, especially in cases where sexual violence is imposed in the family where the immigrant woman works as a domestic help. The victims rarely denounce the acts of sexual harassment or even sexual violence imposed by their employers for fear of not being credible and for the certainty of losing their jobs. Nevertheless, in the course of our on-site investigation, we were able to collect proofs of this phenomenon which confirm their importance, however covert they happen to be. On this subject it is worth noting that the new law on immigration called “Bossi-Fini”, highly supported by the present centre-right government and recently approved by the Italian parliament, puts the lives of these domestic workers in the hands of their employers (who, for example, are obliged by law to report the “unmotivated” departure of their employee from their workplace to the police) thus increasing the risk of sexual blackmail and violence.

Having placed these cases in certain categories, we shall start from the first one by examining the sphere of **discrimination in employment** and in the workplace. It is true that there is a high incidence of these cases, but it is also true that in this type of discrimination the cases, direct and indirect, are less clearly denounced, also and even when they are real crimes. Cases of reducing immigrant workers, both men and women, to servile conditions, almost forms of slavery, are very frequent: one common practice by employers is that of confiscating the workers’ passports and residence permits so as to be able to blackmail them and impose intolerable working conditions on them. The very recent case in the Togni circus (see paragraph 6) is only the last straw of a covert phenomenon, which seems to take place especially in small building industries, on farms and in the field of domestic help and care work. The most widespread act of discrimination in this field is the refusal to employ immigrants exclusively because of their place of origin or, even worse, the colour of their skin. Meanwhile, with the increase of the demand of cheap and unskilled labour in all fields of production (including small and medium industries of the North East of Italy) we have also an increase in the acts and practices of discrimination in the workplace. Men and women workers from third world countries are more frequently offered black unprotected work, that is, the worst contracts, wages and conditions: the most menial and heavy tasks, long working hours, with inferior qualifications even in cases of seniority on the job, adequate experience and good qualifications³⁷. The spreading of xenophobia, the legal mechanisms, the difficulties of obtaining residence permits make the immigrant workers more exposed to blackmail and to the risk of illicit behaviour by their employers (to the point of murder as in the tragic case of Ion Cazacu: see paragraph 6).

Though not so common, there are also many forms of **discrimination in the field of accommodation**. They include two kinds: 1. The existence of a “second” market of rents specifically for non-EU citizens, at much higher prices and worse conditions than the current ones; the refusal to rent flats to non-EU citizens. This is one of the reasons that gives rise to a very common phenomenon in Italy: a large number of people coming from the third world, even when employed, live in unliveable and dangerous buildings, abandoned buildings, makeshift shelters,

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Emergency network against racism-Turin, *Annual Report 2000*, *ibid.* It should be said, furthermore, that on an average the qualifications of migrants continue to be considered inferior to those of Italian citizens by Italian institutions and, therefore, their placing in the lower ranks of the job market is also due to this.

actual shacks. The discrimination applied in this field affects both the private rent market (by individuals and real estate agencies), and public housing. As the migrants are excluded from the latter, they have to resort to the real estate market, where the cases of discrimination are consequently more numerous and more explicit. Almost all reports³⁸ by several Italian observatories are, therefore, dedicated mainly to the living conditions of migrants and to the cases of discrimination in this sector, and not by chance. The surveys carried out in different cities in the North East have underlined that many real estate agencies, not only explicitly refuse to rent homes, but also practice numerous underhanded strategies to do so. When people from third world countries succeed in the difficult undertaking of finding a flat (at the price of suitable “guarantees”, of additional costs, strange formulas of payments...), the relationship with their landlords are distinguished by difficulties, frauds, cheating or even violence. Moreover, the high cost of the rents, especially in large cities, often forces immigrants to live in large numbers in small flats, exposing them not only to difficulties with their neighbours, but also to searches, controls and denunciations by the police, sometimes called by the neighbours themselves.

The **offices and public services** (social and otherwise) are in some cases also causes of further discrimination, not profoundly examined until now. The birth registry office, health services, police stations, provincial labour exchanges, chamber of commerce, banks and so on, which are necessarily “centres of transition” for migrants wanting to obtain health services, birth registry documents, residence permits or their renewal, permits, documents and licences for business activities -, often create material and symbolic barriers against them: they often request longer and more complicated procedures emphasising the practical differences with the Italians; and in a few cases they offer services for linguistic and cultural mediation, aimed at facilitating the migrants, even if they have now become their daily customers and users.

As far as the **conditions of foreign minors** are concerned (about 18% of foreign residents³⁹), recent studies⁴⁰ have shown that the acts of discrimination and the cases of explicit xenophobic violence, have increased dramatically: in particular, there has been an increase of gang attacks against minors and especially against the so-called “nomads”.

As for education, it is right to point out that the state school in Italy – especially compulsory schooling – is one of the institutional sectors where anti-discriminatory projects of integration and strategies are implemented. In spite of this, acts of discrimination have been reported: for example, the concentration of some foreign students in the same class and the consequent marginalisation; an emphasis on stereotyped characteristics of the “ethnic group” the child belongs to; the superficial underestimation of the difficulties of learning and adjustment of the foreign pupil, the causes of which are oversimplified as deriving from cultural differences⁴¹.

It should be added that access to education is excluded especially to a large number of gypsy children: those who live in camp-sites do not always have the material possibility of entering the educational system, especially due to the frequent forced moves (as reported in the above-mentioned case history, during the searches the police sometimes also destroyed the teaching material of the children). Besides, many gypsies are too poor to sustain the necessary expenses to guarantee a normal and dignified attendance in school to their children.

³⁸ ARES (edited by) (2000), *The colour of housing. First Report on the housing condition of immigrants in Italy*, available on the website: : <http://www.sunia.it/files/rappares.html>, (03.07.2002); CESTIM-MLAL Verona (2000), “Project Green Number Schengen... a telephone call against discrimination” available on the website: <http://www.cestim.it/cestim/rapporto-finale.zip>, (03.07.2002); Emergency network against racism – Turin, *Annual Report 2000*, ibid.

³⁹ Save the children Italy, *The rights of childhood: invisible or forgotten? The racial discrimination of minors in Italy*, 11/2000, Summary, available on the website: <http://www.savethechildren.it/pubblicazioni/pubblicazioni.html>, (03.07.2002).

⁴⁰ Save the Children Italy, ibid.

⁴¹ ibid.

When the children do not succeed in attending Italian schools, they often come across considerable difficulties that range from the prejudices of Italian parents to the teasing of school children, the stereotypes of some teachers and headmasters. Although the cases are not very frequent, it should be pointed out that some teachers did declare, for example, that gypsy children disturb the classes with “their stink” and that Italian parents do not want their children to remain with “the same people they teach them to keep away from”⁴².

For a large number of Italian citizens **gypsies** are the prototype of the undesirable alien or even “criminal”⁴³. The serious part of this is that most of the gypsies in Italy live in conditions of isolation from the rest of society: for more than half the gypsies the separation is physical; in some areas they are segregated, live in conditions of extreme poverty and want, without the minimum infrastructures. They can also be forced to difficult moves from one moment to another (a possibility which, as we have already seen, often occurs). Although their settlements (called “camp-sites”) are often defined “illegal” or “abusive”, they are paradoxically favoured by Italian institutions. Italy is the only country in Europe that has promoted a system of slum ghettos publicly organised and sustained, with the result of depriving the gypsies of the possibility of integrating and taking part in Italian social and public life⁴⁴.

The strong hostility towards gypsies give rise to a symbolic expression of the frequent and habitual raids by the police and other authorities in the “ghetto-camps” scattered throughout Italy. The bad behaviour of the police ranges from simple insults to physical threats and the use of arms. In many cases, the police have thrown out the gypsies from the camps illegally destroying their property, documents and dwellings. Besides beatings and offensive treatment, the police have often obliged women to undress themselves to be searched (there are proofs of searches being accompanied by humiliating treatment and sexual harassment)⁴⁵. Most of the raids against gypsy camp-sites in Italy break the norms and international laws in the subject of human rights and the behaviour of the police (as in the case of removals and deportation in Rome).

Lastly, cases have been reported in Italy of racist crimes, collective violence and discriminating treatment against gypsies also by private citizens.

Let us now consider the acts and speeches which can be classified as “**institutional forms of discrimination**”. In some cases discrimination is part of the norms and laws which oblige one to make unacceptable differences on the basis of article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, or give the possibility of leaving these differences to individual discretion; in other cases the discrimination, the expression of prejudice or even abuse of power and violence are in no way accepted by the law, but are arbitrarily made feasible by the representatives of the institutions.

As pointed out in the examination of the cases, the institutions that made discriminatory speeches and acts were numerous: they range from representatives of the police force (policemen, Carabinieri, traffic policemen) to mayors, municipal and regional councillors, local administrators in general; from members of the Catholic hierarchy to members of the judiciary (see the sensational case of granting absolution to the Mayor of Treviso); to the highest representatives of the political power (we only have to mention the declarations of the Prime Minister in office). They are forms that are particularly deplorable because they come from subjects having the institutional function of representing the community and defending their interests⁴⁶.

⁴² ERRC, *The country of camps. The racial segregation of gypsies in Italy*, Series of “International Reports”, No. 9, October 2000, available on website: <http://www.errc.org/publications/indices/italy.shtml>, (03.07.2002).

⁴³ This feeling reached its climax when about 10,000 gypsy refugees arrived in Italy from Kosovo in Summer 1999, to escape from the Albanian “ethnic cleansing” following the end of the NATO bombing and the Serb military presence in the region.

⁴⁴ ERRC, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ CESTIM-MLAL Verona (2000), *Project “Green Number Schengen... a telephone call against discrimination”*, *ibid.*

Among the proposals, opinions and speeches made especially by politicians and local administrators belonging to the majority government parties – that inspire certain immigration policies – a large number can be found to be discriminatory or even overtly racist. The prevalent rhetoric in certain speeches is that focused on the argument according to which the presence of “clandestines” and immigrants in general is a threat to the security of citizens, or even a danger for “Christian civilisation”, the national identity, the local identity or even the “Italian race”. A fairly recurring statement is that according to which the phenomenon of criminality is almost exclusively due to non-EU members, often defined indiscriminately as “clandestines”. The consequent process of labelling caused by the fact that the small “street crimes” are the most common and that the migrants who eventually commit them are the most visible people, encourages the prejudice concerning the danger of immigrants and strengthens it acting as circular causation. In this constant link between the fear of criminality and the need of security, it has become more and more evident that the process of ethnalisation, namely the tendency to identify certain immigrant population groups with certain deviant categories and to attribute specific criminal activities to them.

A process of circular causation is also that linking the expression of politicians and local administrators, especially those belonging to the government majority, to the widespread prejudices among common people amplified by mass media.

These prejudices, as we said before, are not only theoretical, but inspire and justify certain policies. We only have to mention the pastoral letter of the Cardinal of Bologna, Giacomo Biffi, on the presumed impossibility of integrating immigrants of the Muslim faith, supported by the Catholic priest Baget-Bozzo, councillor of the Prime Minister Berlusconi, but also by a lay politologist, Giovanni Sartori, councillor of the left-wing coalition of the Ulivo party. A declaration of this kind can only help to justify policies like those of the administrators of the Veneto region, who proposed and passed measures tending to reduce immigration from third world countries, facilitating the return of Venetians and their descendants who had emigrated abroad in a more or less remote past. This same Veneto region and other regional administrations governed by the centre-right have proposed or passed provisions aimed at encouraging the birth of “Italian children”⁴⁷.

The gravity of these speeches, acts and policies is further accentuated today by the **social alarm** of the **presumed Islamisation** of the country. After the events of the 11th September 2001, there has been a stronger tendency to “Arabophobia”⁴⁸ or “Islamophobia”: a form of psychosis that has contaminated transversally large sectors of the civil community, politicians and institutions. According to some scholars of neo-racism, Islamophobia perpetuates and renews the mechanisms, structures and typical themes of antisemitism: the religion of *others* is interpreted as an *essence*, intrinsic and immutable; the presumed religious belonging of others is “racialised” and considered as an otherness that cannot be assimilated, but able to contaminate and threaten the body of the nation⁴⁹.

A confirmation of the continuation of a hostile atmosphere towards migrants and the difficulty of controlling the phenomenon of discrimination and racism can be seen in the publication of the Second Report on Italy by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)⁵⁰. This report refers to the situation observed until June 2001.

The ECRI says that it is “alarmed by the participation in the government coalition of political parties whose members have resorted to xenophobic and intolerant propaganda and declares that it is concerned about the new government coalition formed in Italy in June 2001”⁵¹. According to

⁴⁷ These measures approved particularly by the regional administrations of Friuli and Latium, administered by the centre-right, give special finances to large families, as the bulwark of the “pure Italian stock”. Some have observed that they sadly resemble the fascist demographic policies.

⁴⁸ See Taguieff P.A. (1987), *La forza del pregiudizio*, Il Mulino, Bologna.

⁴⁹ See Rivera A. (edited by), *L'inquietudine dell'Islam*, Dedalo, Bari.

⁵⁰ Available on the website: http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country_approach/Italy/default.asp#TopOfPage, (03.07.2002).

⁵¹ *ibid.*, chapter Q, paragraph 73, p. 24

ECRI, “the racist and xenophobic propaganda is spread through the use of written material such as posters and leaflets but also abundantly in the speeches of certain public personalities, including mayors and other elected representatives. In most cases, the non-EU immigrants are labelled with stereotyped, stigmatising and humiliating terms”⁵². “This propaganda is essentially focused on non-EU immigrants, especially those who do not have a legal status, but also on members of other minority groups. These people are generally presented as responsible for the deterioration of safety conditions in Italy (...) and as responsible for the unemployment and the increase of the public expenditure, or as a threat to the defence of the Italian national or local identity”⁵³. Indeed, the centre-right coalition represented by “Casa delle Libertà” encourages overtly xenophobic or even racist views, thus contributing towards justifying or attenuating speeches and actions of the various members like Bossi, Gentilini, Borghezio and Boso. Typical of this was the exemplary demonstration in Lodi and the resulting desecration of a mosque to prevent it from being built, promoted by the Northern League, with the participation of “Forza Italia” and the presence of a neonazi group. Consequently, “ECRI expresses its concern about the influence of some parties on the entire political scene”⁵⁴, especially by the Northern League: “The members of the Northern League have resorted excessively to racist and xenophobic propaganda, but we should underline the fact that other party members have also used a xenophobic or intolerant political language”⁵⁵. We should mention, as can clearly be seen from our cases (see paragraph 6), from several inquiries and from the events, that there exists at a local level a collaboration between sectors of the Northern League and xenophobic political groups of the extreme right or overtly neonazi groups like “Fronte Skinheads” and “Forza Nuova”, mainly concentrated in the north of the country. We should also mention that a Euro MP and national leader of the Northern League, Borghezio, has been charged together with others for having burnt a fire near an improvised dormitory of migrants, at the end of one of the numerous “Padane raids”, in other words Northern League gangs against immigrants.

Even before the events of the 11th September, the political scene in Italy aroused considerable concern in the defence of the rights and fundamental freedom of foreign citizens. Today, we cannot but witness an obvious deterioration due to the intensification of Islamophobia after the attack on the Twin Towers, the **policies of the present government on immigration**, generalisation and spreading of discrimination, intolerance, prejudices, owing to the fact that they are expressed and hence justified by members of the government and representatives of the national and local institutions. Moreover, we should point out that it is a “vicious circle” influencing the cultural and social climate, government organisation, directives on the control of “clandestine” immigration and police operations, which have, not by chance, increased from the beginning of 2002. It should be stressed, in particular, that following the so-called *High Impact Operation* there has been one of the most serious episodes of collective repatriation: that of Nigerian women rounded up all over Italy, locked up in the CPT (Temporary hosting centres) “Serraino Vulpitta” and finally repatriated, violating the law prohibiting collective expulsion and deportation. Sometimes these operations give rise to road by road round-ups, in districts with a high concentration of non-EU citizens, violently breaking into the homes and gypsy-camps, at dawn, without warrants, justifying these actions as a “control of documents”. These operations frequently end up with the mass transfer of the immigrants to the Police station or, if without documents, to the CPT⁵⁶.

⁵² *ibid.*, paragraph 72, p. 23

⁵³ *ibid.*, paragraph 71, p. 23

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, paragraph 73, p. 24

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ We should like to state that the CPT (Centres of temporary detention) were established by Law No. 40 known as the “Turco-Napolitano” law. For the first time in the history of the Italian republic, was established the practice of administrative and extra-judiciary detention (in Italy irregular entry and permanence are not crimes but only administrative offences). This clearly goes against the Italian Constitution and reminds us of well-known historical precedents (one example is: the 1940 regulations introduced by the Vichy government on internment). The text of the law is available on the Internet website: <http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/98040l.htm> (16.09.02).

8. Conclusion

The collection of cases of discrimination and racist violence we have selected from press reviews and reports made by local observers, which we have sometimes verified on site, has allowed us to give a brief but sufficiently representative picture of the episodes of discrimination, violence and racist crimes recorded in Italy in the two years 2000 to 2002. We have divided the cases into categories and subcategories according to the gravity, but also according to the context in which the discrimination and racist violence took place and according to the categories of people who were the victims. This made it possible for us not only to facilitate the reading of this analytical study, but also to understand in the course of the analysis: a) which were the subjects and the groups most exposed to discrimination and xenophobic aggression; b) the large variety of social and institutional contexts where the acts of discrimination take place or where the forms of racist, symbolic or physical aggression occur.

The subjects and groups most exposed to this phenomenon seemed to us to be: foreign citizens from third world countries (the so-called non-EU citizens), who are refugees or immigrants for economic reasons; the Romanians and Sinties, in some cases also when they are Italian citizens; at the present time, the non-EU citizens belonging to the Muslim religion, or considered such, are particularly vulnerable. The social areas and places where these acts of discrimination and racist violence take place are, as we said before, extremely varied: in the workplace, at home, in state schools, social services and public offices, on the road... The aggressors are equally varied: private citizens, minors, employers, but also public institutions and “public officials” in the course of their daily activities: the state police, Carabinieri, traffic police. One of the most serious episodes was indeed the killing of a Tunisian citizen, Eddine Imed Bouabid, by three Carabinieri. Equally serious and cruel was the murder of a Romanian citizen, Ion Cazacu, by his employer.

The category of “institutional racism” which we employed in this study is very suitable for showing how the public institutions themselves can be sources and places of discrimination and racism to the point of including both in their legislative regulations and provisions. In these cases, it is extremely difficult to define the category of discrimination itself and above all to oppose and legally prosecute the discriminatory acts and behaviour.

The empirical research has enabled us to record numerous cases of discriminatory and/or racist acts, declarations and measures by local members and administrators of the government coalition parties, the Northern League, (to the point, as we said, of inducing us to put them in a specific category), which stresses even more their classification into the category of “institutional racism”.

In spite of a rather alarming situation painted by the empirical survey, data and information, it seems to us that most of the institutions, and especially the political forces in the government, do not dedicate sufficient attention to the phenomenon of discrimination and racism: maybe they do not recognise it as such, underestimate it, or take it for granted as being endemic, almost natural. Consequently, at an institutional level, there is a lack of attention, resignation or a wilful removal of the problem. But even the democratic and non-xenophobic parties, in spite of data and the daily news, tend to underestimate the phenomenon, conceived as something “physiological”.

Against this disturbing background was introduced the new legislation on immigration which has already had very undesirable effects. Among other things, as we have already said (see paragraph 3), it substitutes the *residence permit* with the *contract of stay* rigidly dependent on the possession of a regular working contract, and therefore, at least for now, it cancels any possibility for migrants or refugees to enter Italy legally. Thus, it does not only limit the right of circulation and stay, it does not only represent a return to the conception of migrants as “guest workers”, but also contributes towards enhancing the negative idea of foreigners coming from third world countries as illegitimate aliens or, in the best of cases, as a disposable labour force to drive outside the boundaries when they are no longer useful. It is obvious that this view does not take into account the principle that migrants, refugees and gypsies are, like everyone else, subjects with rights, nor the idea of the equality of rights and respect universally due to *persons*.

Lastly, in this somewhat negative picture, it is fair to point out that in the Italian civil society there are a number of individuals, associations and unions, sectors in the state schools, municipal governments which carry out an efficient and militant work of opposition against discrimination and racism.

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List of abbreviations used in the text

AIBI – Associazione Amici dei Bambini

ARES – Altra Ricerca e Solidarietà

ATER - Azienda Territoriale per l'Edilizia Residenziale

ATM – Azienda Trasporti Milanese

CESTIM – Centro Studi Immigrazione

CPT – Centri di Permanenza Temporanea

ECRI - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

ERRC - European Roma Rights Center

IRES – Istituto Ricerche Economiche e Sociali

MLAL – Movimento Laici America Latina

PRC – Partito della Rifondazione Comunista