

Neo-fascist violence keeps Roma out of Rome neighbourhood

Thursday 4 April 2019, by [TONDO Lorenzo](#) (Date first published: 3 April 2019).

City council appears to capitulate after protesters set cars on fire and destroy food

Hundreds of neo-fascists, far-right activists and local residents took to the streets of a Rome suburb on Tuesday in a violent protest against 70 Roma people, including 33 children and 22 women, who were to be temporarily transferred to a reception centre in the area.

Demonstrators set fire to cars and bins, destroyed food that was meant for Roma and prevented their entry into a shelter for vulnerable people.

The protesters also included members of [the neo-fascist CasaPound party and the far-right Forza Nuova](#), who finally forced the city council to transfer the Roma women and children to another neighbourhood.

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The protests started on Tuesday afternoon when the local authorities announced that a bus would transfer 70 Roma to a reception centre in Torre Maura, an eastern suburb. Within a few hours, about 300 protesters gathered in front of the entrance of the building, [setting fire to cars and bins](#).

In the afternoon, Forza Nuova said in a statement: "We are ready to raise black flags and the Italian flag against the invasion and ethnic substitution."

The protesters then stormed a van containing sandwiches and water destined for Roma and destroyed the food. [In a video published by the newspaper la Repubblica](#), protesters are seen trampling on food, while someone shouts: "They must die of hunger."

On Wednesday, Rome's city council, which is controlled by the populist [Five Star Movement](#) (M5S), appeared to capitulate and announced it had decided to relocate the Roma in another area.

"We have all lost," said Roberto Romanella, a representative of city council in Torre Maura.

Giuseppe Di Silvestre, the leader of CasaPound, speaking for the extreme right protesters, told la Repubblica: "For us, the municipality's decision is a great victory. If they do not keep their word, we will return to the streets with the citizens."

Last June, the far-right interior minister, [Matteo Salvini, vowed to turn “words into action” in his drive to expel thousands of Roma from Italy](#), as he shrugged off critics who said he was adopting illegal policies reminiscent of the country’s fascist past.

Salvini, the leader of the League, had called for a new census of Roma and for all non-Italian Roma to be removed from the country. The following month, [police in Rome cleared nearly 400 people](#), including dozens of children, from the River Roma camp, despite an EU court ordering a halt to the demolition. The camp had been inhabited for years by members of the Roma community.

Last February, Italy’s intelligence agency had warned in a briefing to the country’s parliament that [attacks on immigrants and others from minority backgrounds could increase in the run up to May’s European elections](#).

The number of racially motivated attacks have risen sharply in [Italy](#), tripling between 2017 and 2018, when the League entered government in coalition with the anti-establishment M5S.

The report from the security intelligence department, which coordinates and submits information collected by the Italian secret services to the prime minister, said racism and xenophobia were among the threats the country could face in 2019. It said there was “a real risk of an increase in episodes of intolerance towards foreigners”.

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