

Italian Senate passes Salvini's security decree against migrants



Rome, August 7 (RHC)-- Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and his far-right League party celebrated the Senate vote in favor of the "Decreto Sicurezza" -- a law that toughens sanctions against humanitarian charities that seek to bring African migrants rescued in the Mediterranean sea to Italy.

Salvini tweeted: "The Security Decree, more powers for the Forces of the Order, more border controls, more men to arrest the Mafia and Camorra. It is the Law. I thank the Italians and the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Approved with 160 votes in favor and 57 against, this security law caused divisions even among right-wing parties including the 5-Star Movement, in coalition with Salvini's party, which expressed reservations about the law, while its senators did not back it.

Nevertheless, their defection was compensated by the fact that the Forza Italia, a center-right opposition party which said it agreed with the law's goals, did not take part in the vote.

The Decreto Sicurezza hikes maximum fines for ships entering Italian waters without authorization to \$1.1 million from a previous \$55,986. It also provides for the arrest of captains who ignore orders to stay away and calls on naval authorities to seize their boats automatically.

The decree not only affects the activities of humanitarian NGOs but also criminalizes those who could support them through public rallies.

"Protesters may not carry objects, not even defensive ones, during demonstrations because those who wear protective helmets or any other object that makes their recognition difficult will be punished with a sentence of 2 to 3 years and run the risk of a \$6,719 fine," explained local media La Stampa.

"Those who, during demonstrations, put people at risk by launching rockets, flares, fireworks, firecrackers, smoke bombs, gas sticks, maces, or others offensive objects, will be punished with a prison sentence of one to four years."

Over the past year, Salvini has clashed repeatedly with humanitarian rescue vessels, preventing them from docking until other European Union countries agree to take in most of the African migrants.

In June, the German vessel Sea-Watch was seized after entering the Lampedusa port without permission. Its captain, Carola Rackete, was detained for a few days before being freed after a judge ruling in her favor.

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