

# *Thousands of Italians protest high cost of living*

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Rome, December 5 (RHC)-- Thousands of Italians have held protests against high cost of living and energy prices, and called for suspension of shipment of weapons and money to Ukraine. The protests, organized by the USB (Unione Sindacale di Base) union with the support of political parties and different social organizations, were held in the capital city of Rome on Saturday.

The protesters were carrying placards saying: "Put down the weapons, raise the wages!" "We are on the streets to tell Meloni and her government, which is a continuation of the Draghi government and the requests of the European Union, that it changes its route or the country will be blocked more and more to avoid a massacre for the workers and of the social mass," Pierpaolo, a USB union member said.

"In previous days, the government has once again allocated money for the war in Ukraine, instead of putting money into social spending, health, education and pensions. We ask that it is necessary to end the war. It is necessary to stop financing Ukraine and it is necessary to end the sanctions against Russia," he added.

From the beginning of the Ukraine war, former Prime Minister Mario Draghi's administration introduced measures that made it possible to send weapons to Kiev without seeking parliamentary authorization for each shipment. Last week, Italy's ruling rightist parties withdrew an amendment that would allow the government to continue sending weapons to Ukraine throughout 2023.

Luigi de Magistris, the USB spokesman who took part in the demonstration, said the protest is the march of unions based in Rome against the policies of the Meloni government and the neoliberal powers. The demonstration is “against the government's economic maneuver that hits the poor and middle class and doesn't even support the companies that produce and create jobs”, said de Magistris, the former mayor of Naples.

The Italian parliament has passed a resolution authorizing the government to continue to help Ukraine, including via military aid, throughout 2023. “The Italian Constitution says that Italy must stay out of wars and we do not consider it fair that money is invested in sending weapons to countries that are in conflict. We ask that this money be redistributed to the people who have the most difficulties,” said Michele, another USB Union member.

Support for Ukraine has been a contentious issue within the ruling coalition with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni positioning herself as a staunch supporter of Kiev. Italy is supporting Ukraine amid an economic crisis, a cold winter expected in the country and the rampant poverty.

Moreover there seems to be an open wedge between parliament and the Italian people. The latest polls show that more than half of Italians advocate peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine and only a third are okay with their country supplying weapons to Kiev.

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