

Tens of thousands demonstrate in Rome against fascism

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Thousands of people gathered in San Giovanni Square, Rome, to say no to fascism [Enrico Mattia Del Punta/Getty Images]

Rome, October 16 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands of protesters have gathered in Rome to demonstrate against fascism, a week after right-wing extremists forced their way into the headquarters of Italy's oldest labor confederation.

The head of the CGIL labour union, Maurizio Landini, led the protest on Saturday under the slogan: "Never again fascism." "It is necessary to build an anti-fascist, democratic network for the whole continent," Landini said. "Democracy cannot be exported through wars, but by giving access to work and rights."

More than 50,000 people attended the rally in Piazza San Giovanni, according to media reports. Among the attendants were Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio and former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte.

Some participants waved slogans in favour of coronavirus vaccines, a direct retort to the protesters armed with sticks and metal bars who trashed CGIL's Rome headquarters on October 9.

Last week's demonstration began as a peaceful protest against new government regulations imposing Europe's most stringent vaccine requirements. The measure, which came into effect on Friday, mandates proof of vaccination, a negative test within 48 hours or proof of having recovered from COVID-19 to access places of employment.

An unauthorised march broke off from the main rally in Piazza Del Popolo and attempted to reach Prime Minister Mario Draghi's office. Among them were proponents of extreme right-wing group Forza Nuova, who waved the Italian flag and extended their arm in a 'Roman' Fascist salute.

The group reached CGIL's headquarters and briefly broke into its premises. The confederation blamed the act of violence on "fascist action squads." "[This was] an attack on democracy and on the world of work that we are determined to repel," Landini said at the time. "No one should think they can take our country back to the Fascist years."

Addressing the crowd on Saturday, Landini made reference to the round-up of Jews that occurred in Rome's Jewish ghetto on October 16, 1945, saying that a return to political violence would not be tolerated. "Being anti-fascist means guaranteeing democracy for all and safeguarding the principles of our constitution," he said.

Landini also used the platform to demand truth and justice for Giulio Regeni, a 28-year-old PhD student killed in Cairo in 2016. The trial in absentia against four Egyptian security officers was suspended earlier this week, due to concerns that the defendants might be unaware of the charges against them.

The decision of a Rome court to nullify the proceeding frustrated years of efforts to investigate the events that led to the student's disappearance in Egypt and bring closure to the victim's family.

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