

MIMMO LUCANO SENTENCED TO 13 YEARS – A CLASS VENDETTA

DAVE KELLAWAY highlights the plight of Mimmo Lucano, mayor of Riace in Italy who has been sentenced to 13 years in prison for supporting migrants.

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Introduction

Mimmo Lucano was mayor of Riace, a small town in Calabria in the South of Italy. He used his leadership to welcome migrants and asylum seekers to his town. Such towns in rural southern regions are becoming depopulated as younger people move to bigger towns or the north. Young immigrant families could help give life and energy back to such areas. Local people married some of the migrants but the legal authorities accused him of setting up false, artificial marriages. He set up cooperatives to help support the newcomers and obtained public funds to do so.

The state has accused him of mismanaging the funds. Even his accusers accept that Mimmo has made no personal financial gains at all. Quite the opposite of what has happened in places like Lazio (Rome region) where hard right and even fascists have been accused of running such cooperatives at a big profit and siphoning off the funds for their own purposes. The services provided by those cooperatives were scandalously poor.

In a situation where practically all the political parties, including the self defined 'left of centre' PD, (Democratic Party), have either adopted a racist attitude to migrants or have failed to adequately support them it is people like Mimmo who stepped up and actually did something. Even the progressive Catholic community has been more supportive than the official

'progressive parties'.



Mimmo's treatment contrasts with the 'punishment meted to people like Berlusconi. He was officially found guilty of fraud and avoided sentencing

on many other big fiscal scandals, but never did a day in prison. He was given community service so he could go and do some sing songs in a few residential care homes. There are literally thousands of cases in Italy where corporate fraudsters with armies of lawyers manage to drag out their trials for years and never end up paying for their crimes.

Riace is in Calabria, the heart of the 'Ndragheta criminal clan which infiltrates all levels of government there, particularly 'influencing' the right wing parties like Forza Italia (Berlusconi), Fratelli d'Italia (Meloni) and La Lega (Salvini). Sentencing a defender of human rights and anti-racist while this criminal clan is relatively immune from prosecution despite controlling significant sectors of the legitimate and criminal economy, highlights a glaring injustice.

A friend from Italy messaged me yesterday explaining that Mimmo was offered a slot on slate for the European elections which if he won would have given him immunity. He turned it down saying his place was in Calabria. Currently he is part of a list led by ex Napoli mayor, Di Magistris, standing in the upcoming regional election taking place this Sunday and Monday.

Mimmo will be appealing and his future will not just depend on the vagaries of the court but on the strength of the national and perhaps international campaign in his favour. We will publicise details of how we can support him as soon as we receive them. *Il Manifesto*, the left wing (the only one) daily newspaper is highlighting his case. Some writers there are calling on Matarrella to give him a pardon. Of course the problem with such a tactic is that it acknowledges in some way responsibility for a crime.

Finally the case of Mimmo Lucano puts into perspective all the verbiage we heard from Starmer two days ago about following the rules and his silence on the fate of migrants crossing the channel. Mimmo followed the rules of human and class solidarity. We salute him.

Statement from Sinistra Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left) 30 September 2021

A Class Vendetta

The court decision to sentence Mimmo Lucano to 13 years in prison leaves one almost incredulous, as if it were a nightmare from which to awaken as soon as possible. Unfortunately it is the reality, the reality of class justice, or rather a despicable class vendetta against a decent person who has responded to the injustices of an unjust world and the ordeal of migrants. Mimmo built solidarity, hospitality, a future of work and a decent life for those fleeing war and misery and for his fellow citizens.

It is a story that began a few years ago (when Minniti and Salvini were in charge of immigration for the government -Tr) with the aim of destroying a positive experience and a reference point for the whole country. It is a murky story where political aims and interests were all too clear from the start and which have now been fully expressed in this conviction in the lower court.

We are living in an upside-down world. Those who practise solidarity and support for the weakest become dangerous criminals. This is the message that now runs through many parts of Europe and in particular along the borders, which are as open to any movement of capital or industrial and financial speculation but are hostile to migrants and their right to life.

This is why today there are so many powerful people, local and national business people and all sorts of dubious operators, who rejoice at Mimmo's conviction. They try to take advantage of it to confirm their questionable economic and political interests.

It is a sentence that also comes at a convenient time to divert attention from the trouble* in which Salvini, the League's famous 'captain', sworn enemy of migrants and the former mayor of Riace, has got himself into. Also it falls just a few days before the regional elections.

We hope that the appeal judgement (we are really curious to see the justifications of the lower court) will soon restore honour and justice to a worthy person like Mimmo Lucano. We express our full solidarity with him, hoping that a strong movement will be created in his support, a real rebellion in the face of such a grossly unjust sentence.

Such a movement is the decisive factor and the way to succeed in affirming genuine social and civil justice and full respect for human rights in this bitter affair. Similiar mobilisations are needed throughout the country in the harsh class clash that pits the indigenious and migrant working classes against the violent attack of the bosses and the government.

*Salvini, leader of the League which is part of the current Draghi government, is on trial for his action as the Interior Minister during the Open Arms affair when he refused to allow a ship overloaded with migrants entry to Italian courts against the norms of international law and human rights.

Please do [sign the petition](#) calling for the release of Mimmo Lucano.

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