

# ITALIAN JOURNALISTS SAY NO TO PRISON WITH BERLUSCONI'S "GAG LAW"

LE 1 JUILLET 2010 FEDERICA COCCO

**July 1st. Italian Journalists take to the street - virtual and real - to protest against a gag law that threatens to put them behind bars if they leak evidence from wiretapped conversations. An exclusive interview with one of the main organisers .**

It was at 1:30 pm, a regular day in February, lunch time in many households, that Arianna Ciccone found she could consume no more of the enduring saga of misinformation on public television. This episode culminates today, July 1st, as thousands of journalists and citizens take to the street to assert their right to know what happens behind the closed doors of the Italian power élite.

On the news of state-owned channel Rai Uno the presenter announced that the Italian Prime Minister had been "absolved" in the trial that found David Mills – husband of former British cabinet minister Tessa Jowell – accused of taking a bribe from the Italian politician.

The contention grew out of the fact that Berlusconi had not been absolved, the trial had been statute barred. This was the outcome of an intense campaign to reform the justice system in Italy, which succeeded in indicting the bribed but not the briber.



***The last step was to make sure that public opinion was steered in the right direction.***



At that very moment Augusto Minzolini – editor of Rai Uno's main news program – became Arianna's target, as he was personifying what was wrong with Italian journalism and information at the time.

This is how the **Facebook group "Dignity for Journalists and Respect for citizens"** was born. Now this very group has gathered around 15,000 signatures calling for the rectification of the news story regarding Berlusconi's trial.

Today, July 1st, the netizens of Italy and allies of **Valigia Blu** – will be taking to the streets – virtual and real – to protest against a new law, known as Alfano Law or "gag law", an anti-phone tapping bill already "greenlighted" on June 12 by the Italian Senate. The penalties for those who violate this law are severe: fines of up to € 450.000 for editors or even detention for up to one month for journalists.

It was put into place to prohibit the leaking of phone and wire-tapped conversations on criminal probes to mainstream media, as well as online media. The bill is now due to receive final approval from the lower house of parliament or Chamber of Deputies. The steering continues.

Many wiretapped conversations have led to a widespread disillusionment with the Prime Minister – known as Il Cavaliere, the Knight, due to his government-endowed title – and his apparatchiks.

The main protest – called on by the **National Press Federation** – will take place in Piazza Navona in Rome, but it will also flow through the channels of online activism. It will be live streamed on websites such as **YouDem.tv**, supported by the Democratic Party, i.e. the main opposition body. Other websites, such as **Diritto di Critica**, are closely following and supporting the protest.



Arianna doesn't have a political background. She was previously an organiser involved with the renowned **International Festival of Journalism in Perugia**, and is now a key figure in this movement. Arianna took the time to explain to OWNI the reasons behind her movement's momentum.



**All citizens should revolt against a law that shackles magistrates and gags information**



*"All citizens should revolt against a law that shackles magistrates and gags information"* , Arianna elucidates, underlining the lack of political interest attached to this type of activism. *"I have been mobilised by the right to know and to freedom of press [...] In a country stained by the prime minister's gross conflict of interest we act as watchdogs, not just for information but also public services which at this moment are in the hands of the various political parties"*, she adds.



*"I don't see **Valigia Blu** as an organised movement. Or even as a movement in itself. It grew within social networks like Facebook. Our "Dignity and respect" group has more than 200.000 members, the fan page has 16000 fans, whereas the website in itself has no more than 2000 subscribers. We are merely committed citizens."*

Wiretapping opponents mostly argue that these leaks deprive individuals of their right to privacy: *"When it comes to public figures, everything about them should be known. If there is a need to protect those who, though involved in tapped conversations, are innocent, one can resort to hearing excerpts. The civil defence and the public prosecutor can decide, along with an independent third-party judge, what material should not be published. Privacy is more often than not used as an excuse. This bill is set to protect the ruling class and the shady practices of white collar workers. Not to mention depriving magistrates of one of the main tools of investigation against organised crime"*.

In the meantime a parallel current has emerged within Valigia Blu. If the bill passes their pledge is to violate it. **“Arrestateci tutti”**, they say.



**Put us all in prison**



The interview was conducted by Adriano Farano

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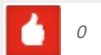
**TERRELL18CHARLENE**

le 12 août 2010 - 18:04 &bullet; SIGNALER UN ABUS - PERMALINK



*When you are in not good state and have no money to go out from that, you will need to receive the business loans. Because that would help you definitely. I take short term loan every year and feel myself fine because of this.*

VOUS AIMEZ



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VOUS N'AIMEZ PAS



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LUI RÉPONDRE

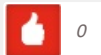
**MTZ 82 ALLEGRO**

le 4 janvier 2012 - 21:21 &bullet; SIGNALER UN ABUS - PERMALINK



*Keep functioning ,great job!*

VOUS AIMEZ



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VOUS N'AIMEZ PAS



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LUI RÉPONDRE

### 3 pings

Les tweets qui mentionnent Italian Journalists say no to prison with Berlusconi's "gag law" » Article » owni.fr, digital journalism -- Topsy.com le 1 juillet 2010 - 17:05

*[...] Ce billet était mentionné sur Twitter par Nicolas Voisin et Federica Cocco, Vincent CHAUVET. Vincent CHAUVET a dit: Ce soir la Summer School sera à la manif pour la liberté de la presse et contre la "loi-bâillon" de Berlusconi à Bxl <http://bit.ly/MoDem-IdV> [...]*

Les journalistes italiens se mobilisent contre la "loi-bâillon" de Berlusconi » Article » owni.fr, digital journalism le 1 juillet 2010 - 21:02

*[...] Italian Journalists say no to prison with Berlusconi's "gag law" [...]*

The Italian cyber-police is watching you, on Facebook « As I walk le 3 novembre 2010 - 20:16

*[...] within the frame of Italian politics, the very same context which gave origin to a ludicrous 'gag law' which have seriously threatened freedom of speech on the web for Italians. And how can one [...]*