

FROM NAPLES: VOICES AGAINST CRIME AND THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE

Those who suffer from a disease are able to develop a stronger immune system against it. That is why I strongly believe that Naples is more equipped to tackle crime-related problems compared to other cities. In fact, the South of Italy has developed an extraordinary wealth of resources and solutions to fight organized crime. The anti-mafia experience, which is predominantly southern, is one of the most important movements in Italy's civil history. This rich past does not describe the South as a crime novel, but as a land where, above all, the people are ready to sacrifice themselves for the advancement of social justice.

The anti-mafia experience does not illustrate the South as a land of poverty, but instead demonstrates the South human capital.



It is a land of the humanity ready to fight social evils and crime where this poses the greatest challenge. There where injustice and pain proliferate, and where deprivation and marginalization are the norm. It is in this deep South, from Scampia to Zen districts, amid the superficial dust of poverty, mafia and injustice, that those who demand justice and strive for a better world, shine the brightest.

We are demonstrating our pride, in the city of Naples, with the United Nations on our side. The United Nations chose Naples not because it is the land of the mafia organization Camorra, but because it is a city with a rich community and strong sense of humanity. It is enriched by the intense emotional network linking together those who fight against crime, with strength and determination, often because they have experienced it first hand. It is a network of people eager to listen and resolve problems, building a South characterized by answers instead of laments; a South defined by justice instead of crime.

Thanks to the collaborating partners, and to the splendid work carried out by the Municipality of Naples, there is a longing here for justice and a desire to listen to one another: to come together as a community and overcome the challenges.

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), in fact, chose Naples for a wonderful project, "Voices against crime." (1) It tells the story of those who fight against crime because they

are victims of violence, and who are ready to unite, together with institutions, to build a solidarity network aimed at healing these wounds and overcoming the pain. UNICRI chose Naples because it is an energetic and colorful city that aches for justice.

It chose Italy because we are, first and foremost, the country of the magistrates Falcone and Borsellino killed by the mafia, and not because it is the country of the stereotypical mafia images such as the beret and sawn-off shotgun.

As Italians, we should never forget this. We must not underestimate ourselves. We must not think that our country is solely defined by crime and corruption. Most countries, with similar or higher levels of criminal violence and corruption, do not have the same instruments for opposition. We must do so with willpower, courage and intelligence. We need to understand our strength and reverse the more superficial visions. For example, Italy was recently ranked the country with one of the highest levels of public corruption. However, this statement is not accurate: the data collected only referred to the perception of corruption and not to reality.

Having said that, we should ask ourselves: do we perceive high levels of corruption because we are in fact more corrupt than others, or are we harsher with ourselves because we truly want to improve our country? In Naples, as well as in the rest of Italy, many problems persist and the continued existence of mafia and corruption remain prominent ones. We need to talk about these issues instead of hiding from them. There is a strong common desire to take a stand and a resilient willingness to believe in the possibility of a different kind of world.

I am sure that "Voices against crime" can provide guidelines for good practices for many other cities around the world also suffering from crime-related issues similar to those in Naples.

Naples has uniquely developed a stronger immune system to defend itself against crime unwanted intrusions on our city and our livelihood.

Talking about our pain and our wounds is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of power. Criminals use violence to silence those who raise their voice the highest to demand justice.

In Naples, not even a thousand guns can silence our cry for freedom.

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¹ A new pilot initiative "Voices against crime" is being carried out by UNICRI in cooperation with the Municipality of Naples, the participation of media partners and the involvement of the academia, the law enforcement and several NGOs. Outstanding testimonials have been also involved to promote the participation of Naples' citizens in the initiative.

The initiative is based on the collection and analyses of victims of crime stories. It aims to shed light on the different type of crime, identify good practices and critical issues to be addressed with respect to victims' support policies and practices. Victims' experiences will be the starting for the promotion of future interventions on prevention, empowerment and assistance with view toward creating lasting change.