



**USITF Newsletter #2, Week of February 6<sup>th</sup> – February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016**  
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Welcome to the second edition of the weekly USITF newsletter, “Italian Politics This Week,” a snapshot on past week’s major events, complete with news and analyses from national and international sources.

**Giulio Regeni’s murder:** On February 12, thousands gathered in Fiumicello, Italy at [Giulio Regeni’s funeral](#), the doctoral student murdered in Cairo, Egypt. While circumstances of his death still remain unclear, Egypt denies being [behind](#) the brutal murder. Italian Foreign Minister Paolo [Gentiloni](#) has urged Egypt to cooperate with Italian authorities to help solve the case. According to the [NYT](#), the killing of the Italian student might create rifts in future US-Egypt meetings. For further analysis, read the NYT [editorial](#).

**Mattarella in the US:** On February 8, Italy’s President Sergio Mattarella met with US President Barack Obama in Washington, D.C, at the onset of his [week-long](#) visit to the US. During their conversation, the two Presidents touched upon the role that Italy will play in the fight against ISIS in Syria and Iraq, in particular Italy’s ["fundamental role"](#) in reinforcing the area of Mosul in Northern Iraq. Obama further said the two countries are working together to curb ISIS’s presence in [Libya](#). Later in the week, Mattarella met with UN Secretary General [Ban-Ki-moon](#) in New York and with Italian astronauts and scientists at [NASA](#).

**Church steps in the civil union bill debate:** Whereas PM Matteo Renzi’s Democratic Party (PD) stated that it will not remove a clause from its bill on civil unions for same-sex couples allowing partners to adopt each other’s biological [children](#), the Senate decided to postpone voting on the controversial bill to next [Tuesday](#). On Thursday, President of Italian Bishop’s Conference CEI, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, urged a secret vote on the civil union bill. However, Italian [senators](#) and Prime Minister [Renzi](#) rejected Bagnasco’s suggestion. More food for thought can be found on [Vice](#).

**European Commission criticizes Italy over handling of refugees:** On February 10, the EC rebuked several aspects of Italy’s work on its management of the wave of [asylum seekers](#). Specifically, it suggested that the program to resettle asylum seekers from Italy was well behind schedule. The report comes amid tensions between EU officials and Italian Prime Minister Renzi on the refugee crisis, budget flexibility, and bank rescues. This week, Renzi compared the EU to the [Titanic’s orchestra](#) and later, at a meeting with EP President Martin Shultz, urged Brussels “to [move](#).”

**Government not concerned by lower-than-expected GDP data:** After the Italian stock exchange rough start of the week, Italian National Institute of Statistics, ISTAT, [stated](#) the national GDP to grown in 2015 on yearly basis by 0,7%, in contrast to the Bank of Italy’s forecast of an expansion of 0.8 percent for the same year, in line with the government’s figures. Nonetheless, Italian Finance

Minister Pier Carlo Padoan pointed out that “decimals have little importance because what really matters is the economy’s path which is growing after three years of recession”. His remarks came at the end of the Ecofin meeting where Padoan stressed how “Italian growth has been confirmed and will strengthen in 2016.” Read more on [Bloomberg](#).

That’s all for this week, see you next Monday!