



USITF Newsletter #4, Week of 21st-27th February 2016

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Welcome to another 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.

Civil union bill approved: It was a long week in Italy for the controversial civil union bill. After the ruling centre-left Democratic Party (PD) agreed to drop the [stepchild](#) adoption measure from the bill, the government coalition reached a [consensus](#) with its junior partner NDC and Prime Minister Matteo Renzi opted to call a vote of [confidence](#) over the contested legislation. The senate voted in favor of the bill on [Thursday](#). "The agreement on civil unions is a historic event for Italy," PD Premier Matteo Renzi tweeted, but LGBT groups were reported as “outraged, angry, [disappointed](#)." The bill was defined as, “watered-down,” by the [BBC](#). The day after the bill was approved debates within the PD ruling party raged and the bill rapporteur, Senator Monica Cirinnà, said she would soon have a separate bill allowing gays to adopt [children](#). The bill’s basic features are explained [here](#).

Italy and Libya: Italy [agreed](#) to let US armed drones take off from its Sicilian base in Sigonella to protect US forces against the Islamic State in North Africa. Rome will authorize drone departures case-by-case and only for defense purposes. According to the WSJ, the US has been lobbying Rome on the issue for more than a year. In the meantime, Defense Minister Roberta Pinotti has (again) ruled out any possibility of a military intervention in Libya: "Libya can only be stabilized through the intervention of local forces," Pinotti told Mediaset [television](#). Italy is urging its allies to avoid a deeper involvement in the war-torn country, after Americans have launched air strikes on Islamic State outposts in Libya and the French have conducted surveillance flights and sent military [advisers](#) to the country.

EU court condemns Italy over CIA abduction of Egyptian imam: The European Court of Human Rights condemned Italy on Tuesday over the CIA abduction of an Egyptian cleric, Imam Osama Mustafa Hassan Nasr, better known as Abu Omar. The imam was abducted while he was in Milan and taken to Egypt, where his lawyer stated his client was tortured. The Court found Italy to have been in violation of numerous human rights issues and added that “state secrecy” principle has been granting impunity to those responsible for the violation. Italy has so far denied any [involvement](#).

Berlusconi spied on by the NSA: Italian La Repubblica and Espresso reported WikiLeaks documents showing Italian former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi being spied on by the US NSA in late [2011](#). Following the news, the Italian foreign ministry summoned U.S. Ambassador to Italy John Phillips for clarification. Matteo Renzi said Italy would “ask information in all seats.” La Repubblica said calls from both cell phones and landline phones were intercepted. More information

can be found [here](#). Matteo Salvini, the leader of populist Northern League, declared on Wednesday that US presence in the country should be [rethought](#).

Italy-EU relations keep going up and down: There has been a lot going on between Italy and the EU this week. On Monday, the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance released a nine-page document to ask for more flexible fiscal rules, growth policies, a eurozone budget and cost sharing of the migrant [crisis](#). Despite Matteo Salvini having stated that Jean-Claude Juncker was “not welcome in [Italy](#),” the EC chief was not intimidated and went to Rome to meet Prime Minister Renzi and to “mend [fences](#).” After meeting with Juncker, Renzi declared, "Our reference point is what the European Commission wrote on flexibility – we're not asking for changes." Juncker later added that the EC introduced "elements of flexibility that Italy is rightly using at this time," in January [2015](#).

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