



## USITF Newsletter #6, Week of 7<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2016

Written by [Tommaso De Zan](#), edited by Bhimsupa Kulthanan and Susanna Bonini

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.

**Is Italy going to intervene militarily in Libya?** The answer seems to be NO right now. Despite Abdel Qader Al-Najdi, the new leader of ISIS in Libya, having declared this week, “We pray that the Caliphate's vanguard in Libya might be the ones to conquer [Rome](#),” Italian policymakers have denied any possible intervention in the North African country. On Sunday, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said he would not send troops in Libya for [now](#). On Monday, Senate Speaker Pietro Grasso urged a political solution and the set up of a [unity government](#). Defense Minister [Roberta Pinotti](#) shared Grasso’s views. The Senate Defence Committee Chairman Nicola Latorre further dismissed the “[totally unfounded](#)” rumors of a military intervention. Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni stated that Italy will intervene in Libya only with prior consent of the North African government and after formal [approval](#) granted by the Italian Parliament. He added that an intervention in Libya could [worsen](#) the situation. According to the Italian Foreign Minister, ISIS currently has [5,000 fighters](#) in the North African country.

**Italian economy showing positive signs of improvement:** In spite of Fitch ratings agency’s [cut](#) of the Italian GDP (from 1.3% to 1% in 2016 and from 1.5% to 1.3% for 2017), positive data showed signs of improvement for the Italian economy. According to the Labor Ministry, 739,880 new, permanent, open-ended job contracts were activated in the fourth quarter of [2015](#). On Wednesday, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) said it is expecting [moderate growth](#) to continue in the first quarter of this year. The same institution reported a [fall](#) in the unemployment rate, from 12.7% down to 11.9%, for the first time in seven years.

**EU policymakers side with Italy on Regeni:** On Wednesday, the Giza prosecutor leading the probe for Egypt, Hassam Nassar, argued that Giulio Regeni, the Italian PhD student found dead in Cairo on 3 February, was not tortured for seven days before being killed. His comments were met with skepticism and considered by many as another attempt to conceal truth in a highly [controversial](#) case. Italian President Sergio Mattarella, after a meeting with Regeni’s family, confirmed the country’s strong commitment to [shedding full light](#) on the case. In the meantime, Italian investigators [have been invited](#) to Cairo to “identify further methods of cooperation between the two judicial authorities in the interests of both countries.” EU policymakers are also siding with Italy on the case and, in a [resolution](#) voted on Thursday, asked “to provide the Italian authorities with all the documents and information necessary to enable a swift, transparent and impartial joint investigation.”

**EU warns Italy over budget:** The Eurogroup meeting of EU finance ministers said that Italian structural deficit compounded by 0.7% in 2016, whereas it should be improving by 0.1%. Given this, "The risk of significant deviation remains even if the maximum potential flexibility were [awarded](#)." According to [Reuters](#), Italy may be forced to raise the tax level in order to stay in line with EU fiscal rules. On Tuesday, the [European Commission](#) (EC) warned five countries (Italy, France, Portugal, Croatia and Bulgaria) to correct their excessive economic imbalances. The following day, the EC [sent a letter](#) to Rome urging the government to take measures to improve its fiscal situation. Economic Minister Pier Carlo Padoan [said](#), "Italy is being asked to make its 2016 budget compatible with the Stability Pact and this will be done."

**Italy worried about greater migrant pressure as Balkan routes close:** President of the Puglia region, Michele Emiliano, expressed fear that "as many as 150,000 people could now arrive in Puglia this year." He further stated "We are waiting for instructions from the government," after Serbia and Macedonia closed their borders on Wednesday. But the Italian coastguard dismissed Emiliano's figures, depicting them as "guesswork," and confirmed that the situation was under [control](#). Lower House Speaker Laura Boldrini was critical of the EU approach towards the migrant crisis, saying that it is "doing what it shouldn't do: there's a tendency to turn a blind eye to some [countries](#)." Later in the week, Eurobarometro stated that nearly a half of the Italians [surveyed](#) in a poll (46%) believe that Italy should not help refugees.

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