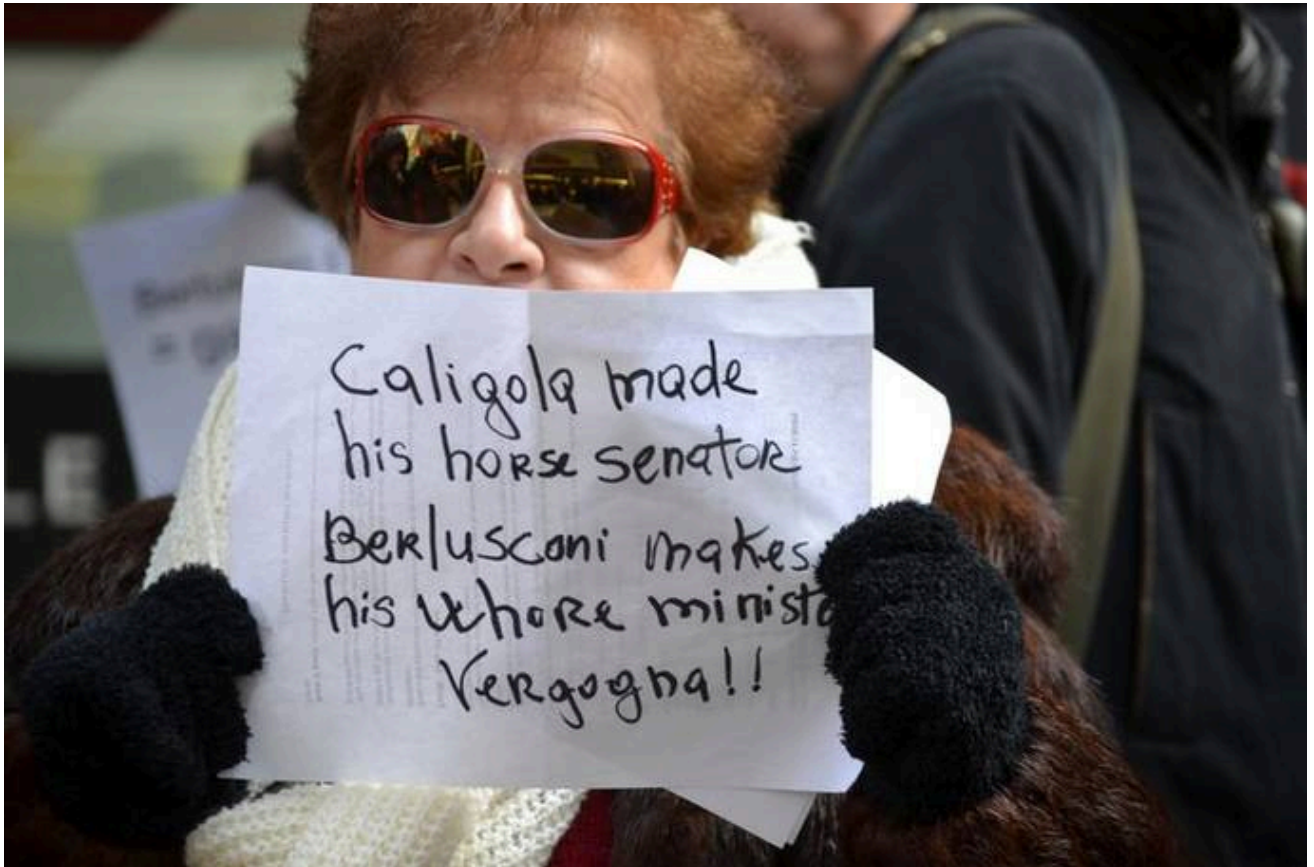


## Defending Women's Dignity

Daniele Chicca (February 14, 2011)



Women demonstrating in support of dignity and respect flooded the streets of Italy and major world cities, including Times Square in New York

Not only women. About two hundred Italians sporting no political symbols gathered in Times Square to defend the dignity of the women and the honor of the country. On Sunday, in New York and many other foreign cities (London, Paris, Washington, Berlin, Barcelona, among others), a world-wide protest took place to ask for the resignation of Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Prime Minister in the midst of yet another judicial scandal.

Cordoned off in front of [Ruby Tuesday](#) [2], (no pun was intended, the organizers swear), a restaurant close to the pedestrian area of Times Square, the protest organized by Libertà e Giustizia attracted double the amount of expected participants. The Prime Minister is under investigation for exaction and exploitation of under-age prostitution, and the Public Prosecutor's Office of Milan has asked for immediate trial. These judicial problems were joined by political troubles, with the



breakaway of the "rebels" of [Futuro e Libertà](#) [3]- the new political group founded by Speaker of the House Gianfranco Fini - which left the government paralyzed, with only a single law approved in the 48 work days since the beginning of the new year.

"We expected about a hundred participants but more than twice that many showed up. And people are still coming" said the organizers Valeria Castelli, Emanuela Travaglianti, and Elena D'Amelio. However, two hundred is not that large a number when one considers the number of Italians in New York. Passersby, curious about the protest, asked for information about the reasons behind the event, and the meaning of the signs and songs ("[If not now, when?](#)") [4], asking for freedom and justice, two values Americans would never dream of questioning, since they represent two columns of American history and culture. Some people knew nothing about the scandals that are surfacing in Italy and in its institutions.

The Prime Minister's answer came shortly after. The leader of the Popolo della Libertà party labeled as "partisan" these protests which featured hundreds of thousands of Italians, especially women, filling the streets of Italy. He underlined that he has always tried to "make women feel special". Berlusconi, who would face 15 years in prison if these crimes were to be confirmed by the judges, appears unmoved. The 74-year-old Prime Minister is convinced that the accusations are false, and without "any correspondence to reality".

Within the week we should know the decision of the judges, the magistrates in Milan, who have to decide if Berlusconi should be tried immediately or not. According to the polls, in spite of all the scandals in which he was involved lately, Berlusconi's party is still ahead with 27% of consent, with the allied Lega Nord supposedly at 12%. The Democratic Party, on the other hand, is calculated at 24%.

Writer and Professor of Semiotics [Umberto Eco](#) [5], during a congress of Libertà e Giustizia, in Milan, explained that foreigners cannot understand why Italians do nothing to rebel. The truth is that Berlusconi's allies themselves should be the ones moving away from him. If the judges should proclaim Berlusconi's innocence, the only chance for Italians to "oust Berlusconi" are the presidential elections of 2012. It is hard to imagine his allies abandoning him now after having backed him until now.

Of course, Sunday's protest included many comparisons between Berlusconi and [Mubarak](#) [6], the Egyptian president kicked out by his own people after 30 years in power with an 18-day-long revolution. But, unlike Tunisia and Egypt, elections are free in Italy.

**Related Links:** <http://www.libertaegiustizia.it> [7]

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