



Giulia Cecchettin's murder: the femicide that awoke Italy to its patriarchal reality

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Abstract: the femicide of Giulia Cecchettin provoked massive reactions in Italy. With unprecedented strength, social movements and the political sphere addressed the direct responsibility of patriarchal culture. Nonetheless, the government was not ready to answer this social challenge.

On November 11, 2023, Filippo Turetta killed Giulia Cecchettin, his former partner aged 22, a few days before her graduation. He repeatedly stabbed her in the parking lot of an industrial area and abandoned her body near the Lake of Barcis, where it was found by the police one week later. After the femicide, Filippo fled to Germany where he was arrested by the German police. The brutal killing of Giulia marked the [105th femicide](#) of 2023 in Italy, and it was not the first one to get media attention and cause societal [outrage](#). Furthermore, it unveiled the presence of a strong patriarchal matrix in the country, underlying the need to address violence against women systematically and comprehensively, in a way that targets the patriarchal culture responsible for this terrible phenomenon. Moved by the shocking murder of Giulia Cecchettin, many people joined the [marches and demonstrations](#), and numerous protests were [organised](#) by associations, schools, universities, and other social actors. Elena Cecchettin, sister of the victim, played an important role in initiating the protests and she also underlined that Filippo Turetta is not a monster (as men killing women are often depicted by

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the media), rather, he is a '[healthy son of patriarchy](#)', a phenomenon still present and traceable in the Italian social structure.

Violence against women: situation and numbers

The legacy of the patriarchal society and the normalisation of the submissive behaviour of women toward men appears, in fact, clear from global statistics. Starting from numbers on femicide, it is significant and worrying that the Italian Institute for statistics has indicated that femicide as a worldwide phenomenon manifests itself in '[genocidal numbers](#)'. When moving to the national situation in Italy, every [72 hours](#) one woman gets killed. Furthermore, 31.5 percent of women aged 16-70 [declared](#) to have suffered sexual or physical violence at least once in life. When discussing the presence of patriarchy in everyday life, one dimension to take into consideration is, certainly, economic violence, an often-ignored issue that, nevertheless, indicates how deeply rooted patriarchy is in a society. In Italy, only 58 percent of women own a [bank account](#), and, in 2022, 44.669 women [left their job](#) due to the difficulty of reconciling working and family life. This data underlines not only the enormous disbalance still present between women and men when it comes to home care and parenting, but also the high financial dependency of women on men. In order to interpret these numbers, it must be taken into consideration that the process of women's liberation in Italy is quite recent. Until 1981 [honor killing](#) was considered legitimate, and only in 1996 rape started to be considered a [crime against the person](#) and no longer a crime against 'public morality'. In the last decades, the legal framework on gender equality developed extensively, especially after the [ratification](#) by Italy of the [Istanbul Convention](#) in 2013. In that year, a [package of laws](#) that address violence against women was introduced. These laws aim mainly at increasing the sentences for violent partners, guaranteeing immediate arrest of those caught in violent acts, and giving the police the power to remove violent partners from their homes. Furthermore, in 2019, a law considered pivotal in the process of elimination of violence toward women was approved. Similarly, the so-called '[red code](#)' law has guaranteed priority to legal complaints concerning violence, speeding up the procedures to protect the victims. The mentioned legal developments have extensively improved the situation. However, more needs to be done to solve the problem. As [underlined](#) by the social movements developed after Giulia's femicide, relevant laws have never been supported by satisfactory preventive measures that are, after this shocking event, being offered as a first step to address violence against women from a structural perspective. The movements propose a drastic cultural change, starting from the implementation of school programs on 'Comprehensive Sexuality Education', which is still [completely absent](#) in the Italian context.

Political reactions

Italian politicians did not remain silent about this crime, although there was a noticeable lack of coordinated action. The Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, [stated](#) that 'each woman killed due to her freedom is an intolerable aberration'. Elly Shleyn, Secretary of the Democratic Party, asked Meloni to put aside the political disagreement and work together toward a plan that introduces [education on respect](#) in schools. Anyhow, there was no lack of argumentative stances by politicians. Shocking, in this sense, was the sentence of a regional councilor from *Lega* political party in Veneto, Stefano Valdegamberi, who [called](#) Elena Cecchettin 'a satanist' and denied the responsibility (and, implicitly, the existence) of the patriarchal society and of the rape culture in the country. When it comes to concrete political acts, right after Cecchettin's femicide, Meloni announced [a new law](#) to strengthen the punishments for violence against women (the law was already in progress in October 2023).

Nonetheless, the specific request- [made](#) by the protestors as well as by part of the political environment to develop an educational and preventive approach targeted at disrupting the culture of possession and control over women, has been currently unattended. To address these requests, the Italian government proposed the '[Validitara plan](#)' that entails courses on relationships in schools. However, the plan presents numerous problems. Among the main issues, it is worth highlighting that the first person proposed as an 'expert' to manage the plan was Alessandro Amadori, author of the book titled '*The war of sexes*', where he expounds the idea that our society risks becoming a gynarchy in which men will be [disqualified](#). Furthermore, the plan does not give a concrete roadmap of proposed activities, and, most importantly, the course proposed to be implemented in schools is designed as an optional subject and not as a mandatory one, as requested and urgently needed.

Nonetheless, Italian people, confronted with a tragic situation of femicide, have [responded](#) with unprecedented awareness-raising campaigns and protests. As never before, after the femicide of Giulia Cecchettin, the patriarchal culture has been identified as responsible for violence against women in Italy. And, finally, the solutions proposed by [social movements](#) and [some political actors](#) have not encompassed only a legal exacerbation of punishment, but also a radical education and behavioural change. However, the far-right Italian government has demonstrated not to be ready for such a challenge, without taking this tragic opportunity to understand that, to protect and promote human rights, it is not enough to enforce laws. It is also necessary to work on the social and cultural preparedness to welcome and respect women's rights.