

# The Role of Local Authorities for the Right to Peace: The Italian Case of Solidarity to the Palestinian People

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## Abstract

The present article conducts an analysis of the political culture of positive peace within the Italian local authorities, and its contribution to international peacebuilding through the medium of City Diplomacy. While this culture is historically rooted in the Perugia-Assisi tradition, it re-emerged as a potent political force during the 2025 protests regarding the Gaza conflict. A research study was conducted on a dataset of 119 provincial capitals over an eighteen-month period. The aim of the study was to explore how these municipalities acted as international relations actors by adopting motions for the recognition of Palestine and humanitarian aid. The findings demonstrate that, despite a divergent national policy, Italian local authorities assumed the role of decentralised peacemakers. In conclusion, this study presents the Italian case as a paradigm of how cities can exercise their 'responsibility to protect' and influence global peace within a multilevel governance system.

**Keywords:** *city diplomacy, right to peace, Italian case, Gaza, local authorities, human rights, State of Palestine*

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## Introduction

Since the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, the United Nations and a significant part of the international community have embarked upon a prolonged process aimed at recognising the right to peace as a fundamental human right. This process - developed through resolutions, charters, and declarations - found a crucial turning point in the work of the Advisory Committee of the United Nations Human Rights Council, started in 2010, and concluded with the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Peace at the United Nations General Assembly on 19 December 2016 (Mascia et al., 2025). Despite the limitations of intergovernmental action, which has not fully achieved its intended goals, it has been through the engagement of civil society and the closest layers of government with citizens that an effective capacity for peacebuilding has been merged. From this perspective, the local dimension has become a political and cultural laboratory for the concrete implementation of peace and human rights principles.

Italy currently offers an exceptional case study of the political culture of positive peace among local authorities, shaped by decades of participation in the National Coordination of Local Authorities for Peace and Human Rights (CNELPDU). While the full scope of this coordination is beyond the focus of this article, it forms the basis of my broader doctoral research, which investigates how the CNELPDU enables local authorities to act as decentralised peacemakers. This wider study provides the theoretical foundations for the present analysis.

The objective of this paper is to investigate how and to what extent Italian local authorities supported the 2025 protests regarding Gaza, specifically examining the adoption of political acts as a means of functioning as international relations actors. By analysing the 119 provincial capitals, this article demonstrates how grassroots activism and an institutional culture of positive peace can serve as a paradigm for city diplomacy when addressing urgent international crises.

Recent events in Gaza, characterized by a devastating humanitarian crisis and relentless military operations, have profoundly impacted Italian public opinion and triggered two divergent institutional developments. On one hand, the central government, despite formal reprimands, has maintained a position aligned with most NATO allies, continuing its support for Israeli institutions. Conversely, Italian local authorities have enacted numerous acts of solidarity with the Palestinian population. In doing so, they have exerted national and international pressure to demand a ceasefire, defend human rights, and reaffirm the authority of international law and the International Criminal Court. This contribution, therefore, aims to highlight the potential

of city diplomacy in upholding human rights, using the Italian municipal recognition of the State of Palestine as a primary case in point.

## **1. City Diplomacy and the Construction of a Political Culture of Peace in Italy. From International Protection to Human Rights in the City**

These premises are directly connected to the recognition of peace as a human right and to the idea that peace is something more complex than the absence of war. Having followed and explored Galtung's (1969) theories on positive peace and the hypothesis that a political culture of peace can be built within societies through the construction of more just realities, the role that cities and local governments can aspire to play on the international level, precisely for the purpose of acting as peacebuilders, becomes clear.

The recognition that international human rights instruments apply directly to the inhabitants of cities led, in 2000 in Saint-Denis, to the signing of the *European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City* (2000). This was the first normative instrument to place the promotion of human rights at the heart of the work of local authorities and their city diplomacy. It was followed by the *Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on City Diplomacy* (2009), which reaffirmed the role of local governments in peacebuilding and the protection of fundamental rights, emphasizing that local-national cooperation is an indispensable condition for effective multilevel governance.

Both documents resulted from the direct experiences of city diplomacy developed through the *Conference of European Cities of Barcelona* (1998) and the first *World Conference on City Diplomacy* held in The Hague (2008). The final document of the latter provides a now-classic definition of city diplomacy, understood as "...the tool of local governments and their associations to promote social cohesion, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction, to create a stable environment in which citizens can live together in peace, democracy and prosperity" (World Conference on City Diplomacy 2008, p. 1).

These instruments reflect a broader shift in the world system where, as Galtung (2000) observes, local authorities emerge as indispensable actors who, unlike states, do not possess arms and are therefore disinclined to view international problems through a military lens. Galtung emphasizes that while states often remain "depositories of national traumas", municipalities act through a symmetric and pragmatic logic that is essential for building positive peace.

This role is theoretically grounded in a “human-centric” legal evolution. As Papisca (2008b) argues, the legitimacy of local governments to act beyond State borders stems from their “responsibility to protect” the internationally recognized fundamental rights of their inhabitants. Papisca clarifies that this responsibility is not merely a moral stance but a functional necessity: because cities are the closest institutions to the people’s vital needs and human security, their duty to safeguard the right to peace is even stronger and more direct than that of national States. As Marchetti (2021) notes, networks among cities and local governments have progressively transformed into genuine urban coalitions capable of jointly addressing global challenges, from climate change to public health, from security to peace, thus helping to overcome the democratic deficits that characterise current forms of global governance.

Italian local authorities are thus part of a broader process, the first issue of which is historical. As will be shown in the following paragraph, local authorities in Italy have developed a series of initiatives over the years with the aim of reaffirming what might be termed a political culture of peace. Consequently, a more precise definition of political culture can be proposed: namely, as a general category belonging to all, and as an individual heritage belonging to each person. For Almond and Powell (1966), it embodies the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions through which citizens engage with the political system. As Almond and Powell (1970, p.91) assert, it is “the subjective work that underlies political actions and gives them meaning”. It can thus be concluded that if general culture provides the tools for social identity, political culture generates the political identity of individuals. Easton (1965) elucidates the concept of political culture: utilising systems theory, the author interprets political culture as a pivotal part of pervasive support for the political system, thereby ensuring its legitimacy and longevity. However, the question is still: how can the political culture of peace promoted by the CNELPDU be defined? Santambrogio (2006) proposed a categorisation of the contents of social representations of the political sphere into three types: symbols, values, and options.

In the context of this exercise, it can be posited that there are certain fixed points within Italian political culture of peace. Among the symbols, the *Perugia-Assisi March for Peace and Fraternity* and the peace flag, created specifically for the inaugural march in 1961, are notable. Among the values, those of Capitini (1961) and Galtung (1969, 1980), political action and non-violence, social justice and equality, are inherently intertwined. Finally, there are the options that reflect the values and theories of Capitini, La Pira and Papisca (1988). Among these options are grassroots action, political pressure on institutions and the utilisation of regulatory loopholes to broaden the

perspective of human rights for all, acting from the neighbourhood to the UN (Marini, in press).

The pressure exerted by the popular solidarity movement that grew in the middle months of 2025 is worthy of note, as it put pressure on municipalities and local governments. In this regard, Mary Kaldor's (2003) research on Global Civil Society elucidates the global process through which individuals engage in debates, exert influence, and negotiate an ongoing social contract or series of contracts with centres of political and economic authority. Consequently, it is the capacity of organisations to exert influence over policy-making that is of significance. This phenomenon is attributable to the inherent dynamics of multilevel governance systems, wherein the pressures exerted on locally elected representatives also influence the actions of these representatives at the international level (Piattoni, 2010).

The defence of human rights in urban areas and local authorities is therefore a daily practice, a mandatory activity, and an act of international politics aimed at influencing all the highest levels of policy-making.

## 2. Origins and Development of City Diplomacy in Italy

In Italy, city diplomacy found an early and highly influential precursor in Giorgio La Pira, Mayor of Florence in the 1950s. La Pira conceived the city as a "laboratory of peace", a space of dialogue and encounter among peoples, and viewed municipalities as entities capable of embodying a mission of social justice both locally and internationally. His *Mediterranean Dialogues*, his visit to Moscow, and his writings on peace stand among the earliest examples of *city diplomacy ante litteram*, grounded in the belief that cities could act as moral and political actors in building a more just international order. In 1961, La Pira in collaboration with Aldo Capitini, organised the "March for Peace of 100 municipalities" between Camucia and Cortona, in the Tuscany region (Bagnato, 2024).

In later decades, theoretical reflection deepened. Recent scholarship interprets *city diplomacy* as a practice capable of redefining key concepts of international politics such as sovereignty, representation, and collective agency. Cities do not merely implement norms produced at the state or international level; they take part actively in their formulation and dissemination. As Acuto and Leffel (2020) argue, cities use as *norm entrepreneurs*, promoting values of sustainability, inclusion, solidarity and peace, and acting as spaces of political and cultural innovation.

Similarly, Klem and Frerks (2008) emphasised the role of local authorities in *peacebuilding* processes, highlighting their capacity to foster citizen

engagement and to join diplomacy oriented towards the promotion of human rights.

A crucial phase in understanding the formation of Italy's political culture of peace is represented by the Nuclear-Free Local Authorities Movement, launched in 1984 and rapidly spreading across the country. This initiative was part of a broader international context started in Manchester in 1980, when the city declared itself "Nuclear Free", asserting the right of municipalities to protect their citizens from the dangers posed by the presence of nuclear weapons. Schregel (2015) argues that this process allowed cities to act as "multiscalar" players, strategically localizing a political field conventionally reserved for national diplomacy.

Manchester's example sparked a global movement involving cities such as Chicago, Paris, London, Kyoto and New York, creating a transnational network of local governments committed to promoting non-nuclear security. In 1984, the first *International Conference of Nuclear-Free Local Authorities* marked the beginning of a process of cooperation that continued in Córdoba (1985), Perugia (1986), Eugene (1989), Glasgow (1990), and Yokohama (1992) (Barrera 1988).

The Perugia conference of 1986 set up the city as a coordination centre and the symbolic "Italian capital of peace". This identity was rooted in the tradition inaugurated by Aldo Capitini, founder of the *Perugia-Assisi March for Peace and Fraternity* in 1961, which since 1978 has become an institutionalised practice promoting a culture of peace. According to Cigliani (2025), the march served as a crucial catalyst for a diverse archipelago of activists, institutionalizing a search for a "modern pacifism" capable of addressing the challenges of the post-Cold War era. Moro (2017) further characterizes this era of mass mobilization as an extraordinary novelty in Italian history, where a "militancy excess" of new left activists challenged traditional party hegemonies through novel forms of direct action. The municipal dimension of Perugia's pacifism thus connects directly to La Pira's vision: both conceive of the city as an active political subject in constructing international relations based on peace and justice (Barrera 1988).

The movement of nuclear-free municipalities also generated an institutional conflict between local and national authorities. The *Regional Control Committees* (Co.Re.Co.), administrative oversight bodies, annulled more than one hundred resolutions adopted by forty-two Italian municipalities that had approved pacifist or denuclearisation measures. This confrontation revealed a profound tension between two conceptions of power: one democratic and participatory, recognising local authorities' right to stand for citizens' aspirations - including in matters of security and disarmament - and the other centralised, grounded in state secrecy and *raison d'État* (Barrera

1988). This clash, as Schregel (2015) notes, revealed a tension between a centralized power and a participatory conception that viewed cities as “pre-apocalyptic” sites with a duty to safeguard their inhabitants. While such local declarations were not legally binding on national governments, Jozef Goldblat (1997) observes that they functioned as a powerful moral and political delegitimization of the nuclear arms race. By 1988, over six hundred Italian local authorities had declared themselves nuclear-free, with many implementing active policies on peace education, cooperation, and disarmament awareness. From this network appeared the CNELPDU, which represented both an organisational and political evolution of the movement, transforming an ethical mobilisation into a structured institutional action (Barrera 1988).

In 1991, the CNELPDU launched a campaign to include the so-called *Peace and Human Rights Clause* in municipal and provincial statutes (Papisca, 1994). This process has got political and legal significance of a quasi-constitutional nature. As Papisca (1997) sees, this clause creates a bridge between domestic and international legal orders, unified by the ethical and juridical paradigm of human dignity. In this way, it defines a “glocal” space of rights, within which local authorities act as active subjects of a *super-constitution* of human rights (Mascia & Papisca, 2011).

The introduction of this clause also led to the creation of local government offices and departments dedicated to peace and human rights, thereby merging the identity of municipalities as institutional promoters of a culture of peace. It is clear that, in the 35 years since the start of the campaign to promote the Peace and Human Rights Clause, 94 of the 119 statutes of Italian provincial capitals have incorporated at least one reference to peace. It is evident that a number of these references prove a clear inclination towards the acknowledgement of international human rights law. Furthermore, they serve as a testament to the efficacy of regulatory fertilisation, which has been proven to be a significant factor in the establishment of an international order that places a substantial emphasis on grassroots institutions (Vanzan & Mascia, 2025).

Between 2006 and 2008, the international trajectory of the CNELPDU reached a significant institutional milestone. The 2006 conference in Perugia, entitled “Peace built by cities of human rights”, not only commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the Coordination’s foundation but was also part of a fertile collaboration with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Dutch association VNG International. This process culminated in the participation of the Italian delegation in The Hague at the first World Conference on City Diplomacy (Papisca 2006, Papisca 2008a).

As Papisca (2008a) observes, the overarching approach within which the City Diplomacy movement is delineating its political action is that of global governance, understood as the dissemination of a uniform strategy of human security and human development across various territorial levels, from the micro-local to the macro-global. The architectural framework supporting this shift is multi-level governance, which is considered the most suitable model for promoting the coordinated exercise of functions among a threefold order of public institutions: states, local authorities, and supranational institutions.

In this context, local authorities are no longer viewed as mere administrative branches of the central state but as the “primary territorial pole of subsidiarity”. This role justifies their claim for adequate institutional recognition and operational space within the decision-making processes of multilateral institutions, starting with the United Nations. The legitimacy of such a claim rests on the fact that local governments are the closest institutions to the citizens’ vital needs and are therefore the primary guarantors of the international law of human rights (Mascia & Papisca 2011).

In this regard, through the Opinion on City Diplomacy (2009), the EU Committee of Regions explicitly recognized that local-national cooperation is an indispensable condition for an effective multi-level strategy for peace and democracy. This document reaffirms that it is the duty of local authorities to work for freedom and progress, contributing to international stability by utilizing their deep knowledge of the territory to respond to crises more effectively than central governments often can.

The activism of Italian local authorities reached a new peak through their decisive involvement in the UN Human Rights Council’s campaign for the *Declaration on the Right to Peace*. This campaign transformed the theoretical debate into a political demand, advancing an innovative concept of the right to peace as a “right-to-action”. According to this paradigm, peace is not merely a diplomatic goal but a legal entitlement that imposes specific duties on states, ranging from disarmament to the regulation of private military enterprises (Mascia et al. 2025).

Italy’s response, coordinated by the Human Rights Centre of the University of Padua and the CNELPDU, demonstrated the effectiveness of multilevel mobilization: over one hundred municipal councils, four provinces, and four regions (Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, and Marche) adopted resolutions endorsing the UN initiative. This mobilization culminated in the 2014 Perugia-Assisi appeal, which reclaimed peace as a fundamental right inherent to life and a precondition for the enjoyment of all human rights. By requesting the Italian Permanent Mission to the UN to support the original draft of the Advisory Committee (specifically Article 1), Italian local authorities acted as true “norm entrepreneurs”, challenging the state-

centric monopoly over international security (Mascia et al. 2025; Acuto & Leffel 2020).

The international relevance of this Italian model was formally recognized on 15 October 2014, when the Memorandum “*Peace: A Right for All*” was presented to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. Signed by 63 European cities, the document explicitly paid tribute to the Italian initiative, reaffirming that it is the duty of local authorities to employ city diplomacy to safeguard international stability and promote a culture of peace (Mascia et al. 2025).

This decades-long process of “normative fertilization” (Mazzucchelli 2011) created a robust institutional infrastructure, comprising dedicated peace offices, specific statutory clauses, and a consolidated political culture, that allowed for the rapid mobilization observed in 2025. The response to the crisis in Gaza and the support for the Global Sumud Flotilla were not isolated emotional reactions, but the direct outcome of this structured identity. When the central government remained aligned with geopolitical military alliances, local authorities utilized the tools of city diplomacy and the right to peace developed through these historical campaigns to act as human rights defenders, demanding international legality and the recognition of the State of Palestine.

### **3. City Diplomacy Today: The Case of the Solidarity to the People of Palestine**

Today, the vitality of Italy’s political culture of peace is clear in the many mobilisations of local governments expressing solidarity with the population of Gaza and advocating for the recognition of the Palestinian people’s right to existence. Between May and October 2025, there was an escalation in street protests and demands from Italian civil society for the government to take a stand and raise its voice against the ongoing genocide in Gaza. The focal point of this discourse, in addition to the calls for a boycott, is support for the Global Sumud Flotilla, a humanitarian mission included of civilian vessels that aim to breach the Israeli naval blockade and deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip (Della Porta et al. 2025). The protests saw a substantial escalation during the summer months, culminating in a general strike in solidarity with Gaza on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and street protests in response to the Israeli Navy’s assault on the flotilla and the later arrest of its entire crew on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025. As Albanese (2025) also pointed out, throughout Israel’s war against the people of Gaza, the Italian state kept its military support for its ally. Precisely for this reason, one of the strongest actions taken by

Italian citizens was to block ports and illegal shipments aimed at supplying the Israeli army with weapons.

In response to popular protests and civil society pressure, municipalities across the country have adopted resolutions and motions calling for a ceasefire, demanding respect for international law, and reaffirming the centrality of human rights. The data collected shows that: from the second half of 2024 to November 2025, as many as 81 provincial capitals out of 119 (this number includes all provinces, even those with more than one capital) have approved measures that can be considered acts of solidarity with the people of Gaza and in support of peace, ranging from symbolic recognition of the State of Palestine to concrete measures of cooperation and humanitarian aid. These actions confirm the capacity of local authorities to act as *human rights defenders* (UN 1998), filling the gaps left by nation-states and reaffirming their role as democratic actors in the multilevel governance of peace.

Solidarity acts in Italian provincial capitals

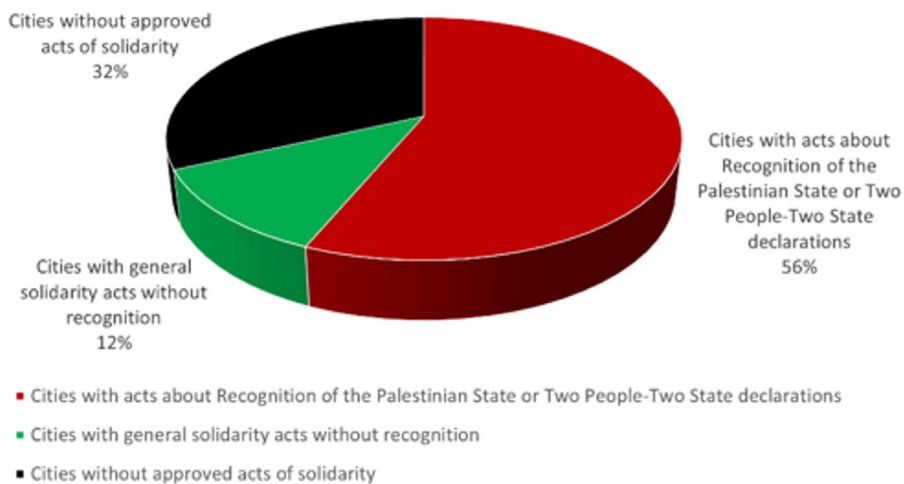


Figure 1 - Personal processing

Of these 81, 67 approved acts related to the recognition of the State of Palestine or the request for recognition by the Italian State and the continuation of the 'Two Peoples-Two States' path, which recognises the need for peaceful coexistence between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. A further 14 provincial capitals have passed acts of general solidarity, calling for a ceasefire, the sending of humanitarian aid, and for peace. However, these acts do not include any reference to the recognition of the State of Palestine.

Furthermore, in 22 provincial capitals, minority factions presented motions or agendas for analogous reasons yet were opposed by the majority of those elected to the municipal councils. The motions were thus presented in 85% of the municipal councils of provincial capitals in Italy and approved in 68%. A survey of Italian provincial capitals reveals that 56% of these municipalities have formally recognised the State of Palestine through motions, agendas, or resolutions adopted by their highest elected bodies (figure 1).

Here is reported a table which summarises these actions:

Category of Act	Description and Legal Nature	Number
Recognition of the Palestinian State or Two People-Two State declarations (Order/Motion/Resolution)	Acts of Political Guidance (Order of the Day/Motion) that explicitly request the Recognition of the State of Palestine from the Italian Government. They have a strong political value.	67
Cities with general solidarity acts without recognition. E.g. Ceasefire or Symbolic (Order/Motion)	Acts of Political Guidance that are limited to requesting a humanitarian ceasefire and/or the sending of aid, without mentioning Recognition.	14
Total provincial capitals with Approved Acts		81
Cities with rejected acts (Order/Motion)	Motions presented in municipal councils (of solidarity, recognition, or other) and rejected by the majority.	22
Cities without acts voted	No solidarity proposal has been presented or put to the vote.	16
Total Italian provincial capitals		119

The first political fact is that local councils and mayors, the elected authorities closest to the population, at once understood the mood and demands of their citizens. The substantial, frequent, and pacific street protests have swiftly instigated responses from local institutions, which perceive a responsibility to act as their representatives. In a moment of severe humanitarian crisis, the political culture of peace of Italy's provincial capital municipalities has responded by giving a strong political and symbolic signal.

The investigation into the impact of the genocidal situation in Gaza on Italian local political culture reveals a significant shift in the discourse surrounding peace, expressed through the legislative and symbolic actions of sub-national authorities during the latter half of 2025. As shown in figure 2, the number of acts increased exponentially over a period of 18 months.

Furthermore, the second and third quarters of 2025 (April-September), during which strikes and street protests occurred, accounted for most approvals in municipal councils. During the street protests of those months, fifty-seven out of a total of eighty-one acts were approved.

Number of Italian provincial capitals that approved acts of solidarity with Palestine during 18 months

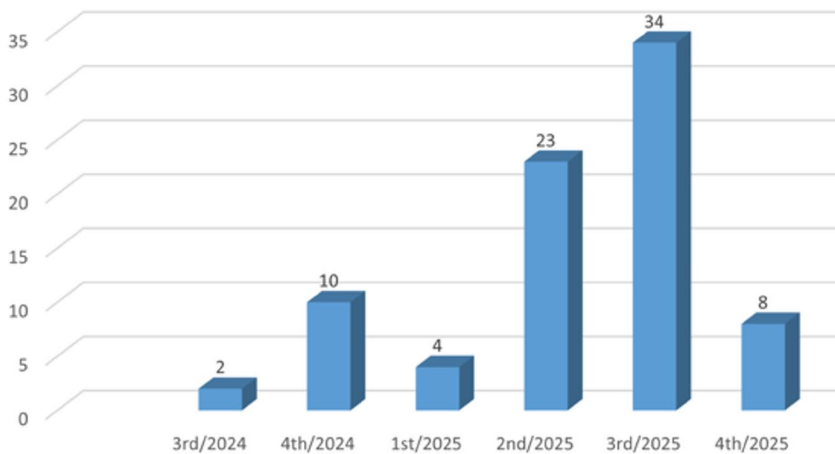


Figure 2 - Personal processing

This phenomenon is particularly complex, given its emergence from an extraordinary media environment and a massive yet non-centrally directed mobilisation across civil society.

The study focuses on Italy's complex administrative geography, including 20 Regions, 107 Provinces, and over 7.900 Municipalities, specifically examining the 119 provincial capitals (a count that accounts for provinces with multiple capitals, and includes the 14 Metropolitan Cities).

These actions are fully classifiable as city diplomacy, designed to exert strong political pressure on the Italian national government and contribute to the construction of international peace. In a context where the central executive has maintained a cautious and essentially passive stance these municipal initiatives represent a localized but powerful "institutional alternative". By filling the diplomatic void left by the State, local authorities have transformed their administrative acts into instruments of explicit political dissent, leveraging their proximity to citizens to demand a radical shift in foreign policy toward the protection of human rights and the enforcement of international law. The significance of this response is amplified by its scope: not only did a high percentage of provincial capitals

act, but also eight Regions approved strong solidarity acts since March 2024: Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Toscana, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Campania, Puglia and Sardegna. Furthermore, all 14 Metropolitan Cities, which represent approximately one-third of the total Italian population, passed motions, demonstrating the pervasive and often cross-party political nature to the solidarity movement.

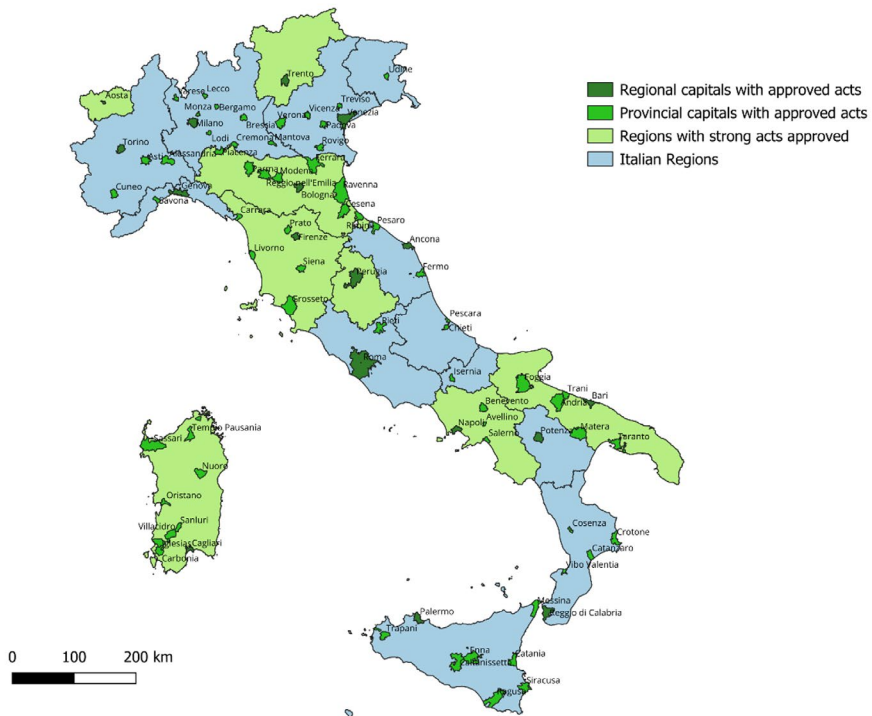


Figure 3 - Personal processing

The map reveals some key facts: at least one provincial capital in every region has approved acts of solidarity or recognition of the State of Palestine. The territories of regions that have approved such acts are shown in light green. Darker green areas represent provincial capitals, and those with names represent regional capitals. Seventeen out of twenty regional capitals have approved such acts, with the exceptions of Campobasso, L'Aquila and Trieste. The extent of the approval is significant, demonstrating that pressure, protests and solidarity at the national level have led local authorities throughout the country to take action.

The temporal evolution of these acts is also critical, illustrating a shift from first calls for peace, to demands for a ceasefire, culminating in the

increasingly common recognition of Palestine, especially following the initial massive Israeli bombings. Although data is not yet exhaustive for all 7.900 municipalities, the observed 68% engagement rate suggests a potentially vast scope, translating to over 4.000 acts nationwide. Consequently, the Italian case proves that peace is being actively cultivated not only as an international goal but as a daily process of local democracy, participation, and shared responsibility, making city diplomacy a highly promising pillar for fostering a political culture of positive peace.

It is clear that the actions of the various municipalities are often analogous. Undoubtedly, the dissemination of ‘drafts’ among local administrators has led to the standardisation of references. It is evident that the following elements are almost invariably present: condemnation of the Hamas attacks of 7<sup>th</sup> of October, references to UN Resolution 181, which effectively established the concept of two peoples and two states, references to UN resolutions that condemn genocide and to the International Criminal Court, and Israel’s illegal occupation of the occupied territories. In less frequent instances, reference is made to the Italian Constitution and its Article 11, and on rare occasions, to municipal statutes that nominate, pursue, or defend peace.

Therefore, the municipality of Cagliari emphasises in its preamble that: “The recognition of the State of Palestine is not to be regarded as an act of antagonism towards the Israeli people or the State of Israel. Rather, it is to be regarded as a step towards a just and lasting peace that guarantees security and dignity for both peoples, following international law and the principle of dialogue”.

With respect to the commitments undertaken by local authorities, 67 out of 81 acts recognise the State of Palestine or call upon the Italian central government to recognise it. In their joint statement, the parties called upon the central government to utilise diplomatic channels to set up a just peace process that would bring an end to the ongoing conflict.

In consideration of the momentous nature of the events in question, the significant level of media attention they have attracted, and the pressing urgency that has been attributed to the acts in question, which has been compounded by the ongoing protests, it is imperative to address this matter with the utmost urgency. This may be attributable of ignorance on the part of local government representatives about municipal statutes, resulting in a paucity of references to articles of the statutes that pertain to peace and the roles assigned to the municipality itself regarding international politics. Within the Italian context, it is notable that 94 out of 119 (78%) municipalities incorporate references to peace in their respective statutes, formally named as the Peace and Human Rights Clause (Vanzan & Mascia 2025). In this regard, 65 out of 94 (69%) municipalities that have references to

peace in their statutes have approved acts of solidarity to Gaza, but equally significant is the approval of acts of solidarity by as many as 16 out of 25 (64%) municipalities that do not have references to peace in their statutes. These figures once again highlight the widespread mobilisation of local authorities in solidarity with the Palestinian people, even to the detriment of the structures and traditions already proven in their administrations and systems of government. However, it is clear that most of these acts, which are of a political nature, have their origins in municipal council meetings rather than administrative bodies such as the Mayor and the Executive Committee.

In conclusion, the latest data concerns the provincial capitals that participated in the *Perugia-Assisi March for Peace and Fraternity*, which took place on October 12, 2025, and was imbued with meaning and solidarity with the Palestinian people. The March, which Francesca Albanese also participated in, could be considered the final manifestation of the wave of protests in solidarity with the Palestinian people and the Global Sumud Flotilla of the summer of 2025. Historically, the local authorities that officially participate in the March respond to the official appeal launched by the organizers. In 2025, 278 local authorities responded to the call, including 36 provincial capitals (Perugiassisi Organizing Committee 2025). Regarding the study presented in this article, it is interesting to note that 30 of the 36 participating municipalities have a reference to peace in their statutes (Peace and Human Rights clause), while six participated without any legal reference. In the 18 months since the current situation began, 32 of these 36 entities have formally approved acts of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, it is possible to reiterate certain facts suggested by the data and the historical and political context analysed in this paper. The ongoing genocide in Gaza and Israel's flagrant disregard for human rights in Palestine have catalysed widespread protest and mounting pressure from the grassroots worldwide, including Italy. In contrast, certain countries, including Spain and Slovenia, have expressed their opposition at the governmental level. However, a considerable proportion of the Western world, notably Italy, has supported its historical alliance with Israel, persistently providing support and armaments to the Israeli military. This national government stance reflects a form of strategic realpolitik towards allies that has often appeared vague and essentially complicit in the face of international law violations.

In Italy, however, where there has historically been a tradition of independent political action by local authorities, there has been a significant reaction from municipalities, provinces, and regions. The influence of popular sentiment, propagated from the grassroots, exerted a direct impact on local councils, compelling them to adopt resolutions that underscored solidarity with the Palestinian people, vehemently opposed any acts of genocide, and advocated for a concerted international effort to foster a just peace in Gaza and Palestine. By doing so, these municipalities have acted as genuine international relations actors, filling the diplomatic and ethical vacuum left by the central government's inertia.

The number of acts approved is challenging to count at national level across a vast number of 7,900 municipalities, including numerous diminutive ones. But 81 of 119 provincial capitals have ratified acts of solidarity with Gaza and recognition of the State of Palestine, many of them issuing multiple acts between 2024 and 2025. The solidarity shown by the squares and the actions of global civil society, such as the Global Sumud Flotilla, have prompted a reaction from picked local administrators, who have joined the popular protest efforts. These findings demonstrate that Italian local authorities have effectively assumed the role of 'decentralised peacemakers', translating grassroots mobilization into formal institutional policy.

Local authorities have once again assumed the role of diplomatic agents for peace and human rights, instigating a proliferation of actions that have exerted a significant international impact, partly due to symbolic actions such as the display of the Palestinian flag from the windows of town halls and municipal buildings. These initiatives represent a paradigm of how cities can exercise their 'responsibility to protect' and influence global peace within a multilevel governance system, even when national policies diverge from international humanitarian imperatives.

The social networks of parties, associations, and individuals, which are indicative of democratic health, have ensured that motions and agendas are reiterated from municipality to municipality. Therefore, it is suggested that the development of city diplomacy networks, and the relationships between cities in different countries, could contribute to the health of global democracy by becoming operators of peace and human rights at the international level.

Finally, the political culture of positive peace among Italian local authorities appears to be firmly entrenched, as demonstrated by the actions of solidarity on the part of municipalities that have regulatory provisions in their statutes and choose to participate in symbolic events such as the *Perugia-Assisi March for Peace and Fraternity*. Ultimately, the Italian case proves that when the state falters in its commitment to human rights, the local dimension

remains the most resilient laboratory for defending the Right to Peace as a daily democratic practice.

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