

# WE ARE ALL ROBIN HOOD #IOMIASSOCIO



Milan, Thursday December 13th 2018, 5:00 AM. The police raided several squatted apartments in Giambellino (a neighborhood at the periphery of the city) and in neighborhoods throughout Milan. They wanted to arrest nine members of the Tenants Committee of Giambellino-Lorenteggio (Comitato Abitanti Giambellino Lorenteggio, hereafter simply "Comitato") for "criminal association with the goal of squatting real estate." Eight of the accused were found and arrested in the raids. The operation affects comrades and families alike who have organized with the Comitato. During the raids, police evicted and seized nine homes and la Base di Solidarieta Popolare (the headquarters of the Comitato, situated in Via Manzano 4). Those arrested are currently under house arrest with strict conditions forbidding them from seeing or communicating with others. The inquiry is still ongoing and around seventy people are under persecution. The dimension of this repressive operation speaks for itself and reflects the will to eradicate and criminalize ongoing social struggles.

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The press began a slander campaign against the Comitato immediately, comparing their political work in the neighborhood to criminal racketeering, publishing intercepted phone calls made by carabinieri and portraying the arrested as

“the Robin Hoods of Public Housing” who have finally been brought to Justice.

At a press conference, Prosecutor Alberto Nobili triumphantly presented the results of a four year investigation. He described a criminal association that wasn't asking for money, but rather aimed to generate “social justice,” had the will to “replace the state” and to “create consensus” in the neighborhood, thus increasing the risk of a “dangerous drift”.

In reality there is one real ongoing “dangerous drift” enforced by those in power: the degradation and abandonment of Giambellino and Milan's other peripheral neighborhoods...

This is not just due to the incompetence of individual Councilmen or the City government. It is the result of a calculated plan to dismantle public housing in Lombardia. According to neoliberal logic, these projects are outdated and better left to rot, or else turned over to the free market. Despite the long list of applicants in search of housing assistance, ALER [1] have left tens of thousands of houses unassigned and empty in the region. ALER is a failing company with nearly half a billion Euros of debt, and a long history of scandals and corruption. All political parties have been involved. First and foremost is Lega[2], which has been governing the region for ten years. If apartments don't get assigned to an applicant, the only solution is to resort to the private real estate market. Or to squat them. In their investigation, even the police point out that the occupations have occurred in “unassigned” apartments. They also have to admit to the disastrous mismanagement of public housing in Milan.

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Milan is the capital of real estate speculation in Italy, with some of the highest rents in the country, inflated interests on loans, and investment schemes by big business. On the contrary, evictions are the only, and rather expensive, public investments aimed at cleaning the metropolis of its most unwanted inhabitants, who cannot afford to buy the new city life and therefore no longer have a place here. So the real estate market grows, and those who can't keep up with it are pushed to the margins: economic, social and geographical hell.

Besides a few campaign visits, no politician has ever really faced Milan's housing emergency. The quartieri popolari are areas of non-existence, the opposite of the City Center, where luxury and extravagance are on full display. Here, desperation grows and conflicts are instigated among the poor, as some pit themselves against those worse off than them, for fear of falling even farther into exclusion and marginality.

And yet, life, and sometimes even resistance, continues to exist in this desert. There are many people occupying apartments. Sometimes these actions, born of need, turn into something even bolder.

Over the last few years, in Giambellino and beyond, committees were created in which those condemned to live in misery, fear, and loneliness, have organized themselves with others at the bottom to live a better life. Occupying a house, fighting an eviction, creating free afterschool programs, or putting together a soccer team are all acts of solidarity that build the fabric of a different present.

In the ruins the City has unloaded at the outskirts, there are people who won't resign themselves to mere survival, and who are taking charge of their lives.

These neighborhood-based, self-organized communities broke a pattern of isolation, and refused to remain organized on the false grounds of ethnicity and skin color.

“Neighborhoods belong to the people who live in them” is much more than a catchphrase: it represents people’s decisions to not settle for scraps, and to demand what they deserve.

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The District Attorney's office decided to call all this associazione a delinquere - criminal association. It tried to force a world of solidarity and autonomy into the cages of law and regulations. It is not by chance that such an operation would occur now, after Salvini's new Security Decree [3], as all practices of struggle and solidarity efforts are being attacked. It's part of a broader picture - the criminalization of the Comitato of Giambellino reveals the governing program and the social idea beneath it. It is not a war against injustice and poverty, but against the poor.

The powerful are afraid that people will leave behind the resignation, as in Giambellino and elsewhere, and will no longer wait for electoral solution to their problems, but will instead organize together to address them directly.

And so this operation does not concern Giambellino alone. It is a threat and attack on all resisting communities, to any collectivities that are building in different places and who together form the fragments of a new world against the current catastrophe. The specter of legality is raised up against the living body of struggles.

For these reasons, we are calling everyone to show their solidarity to the Comitato Giambellino, those arrested, and everyone who has decided to organize.

They call us Robin Hood.

It's an honor.



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[1]ALER:

Azienda lombarda edilizia residenziale; former institute for the popular houses, now a company that owns the public housing in the region LOMBARDIA with the goal of making money off of them. Mafia infiltration of ALER is well-known and many former heads of the company have been arrested for that reason. With more than 10,000 empty houses in Milan and more than 30,000 families waiting for housing, their objective is to evict the vacant homes and open them up for market speculation.

[2] Lega:

Formerly Lega Nord, Lega is the governing party. They are the right-wing populist party of Matteo Salvini, who is the current minister of the interior. The Lega once advocated an ethno-regionalist supremacy for northern Italians, but now advocates traditionalist and anti-immigrant "Italians first" policies, with the backing and support of right wing demagogues such as Steve Bannon. The Lega has provided a platform for the resurgence of other far right formations and groups, including neo-Fascist and misogynist groups, similar to the 2016 Trump campaign in the United States.

[3]Pacchetto sicurezza: a pack of new laws concerning immigration in particular but also different fields of struggle, such as housing struggles. The laws were written by Lega Nord but have been adopted by the government. They increase criminalization of migrants and the sentences associated with those crimes. A big part of the Decreto is dedicated to incoming migrants and the further criminalization of illegal passage into Italy. Many protest methods face harsher punishment under the new laws, including blocking traffic and occupying vacant homes.