



Local elections in Sicily - "No gifts will be given to the left"

With [these words](#), Forza Italia leader Silvio Berlusconi expresses his satisfaction of the outcome of the local elections in Sicily on June 12. With a united centre-right strategy, his party has been successful especially in Palermo. Roberto Lagalla, joint candidate of the centre-right parties (consisting of the federalist and EU-critical Lega, the national-conservative Fratelli d'Italia, the Catholic-democratic Forza Italia and other small liberal-conservative parties), [won the election with 47.6%](#). His [election programme](#) is mainly about changes in the city and administration and changes of an economic nature, which are to advance Palermo as the capital of the economically weak region of Sicily. Migration, human rights, or the political and humanitarian tragedy in the Mediterranean have not been any issue in the election campaign - neither for left nor for right-wing parties. Palermo, the location of our field office in Sicily, is located at the external border of the European Union.

Especially with regard to the previous mayor, Leoluca Orlando, the upcoming change seems great. Even if Orlando's work and activities have been controversial among Palermitans and recently lost approval and popularity, his [open attitude towards migration](#) has been his trademark. With the Palermo-Charta on the international mobility of people, also beyond the Schengen-area, he created a political basis for opening Palermo's ports contrary to Rome's political line.

The hope remains that the situation for human rights activists will not drastically worsen. "Let's hope that the new political situation will at least open the way for new energy, new ideas, new acts of solidarity and courage!" - Human rights activist in Palermo.

So, the impact which this political change will have on our work remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that the majority, Lagalla envisages in the [city council](#), is clearly to the right politically - supported by adherents of Berlusconi, Salvini and Meloni. Moreover, there are people with old [connections to the mafia](#) who have even been convicted in this context. His wife's family is also known to have [links to the mafia in Agrigento](#), however, Lagalla has publicly distanced himself from it. To mark his inauguration, he held a memorial service for those killed by the mafia on June 21.

OUR VOICE, a young activist association in Palermo, found clear words: "In view of the election campaign supported by mafia-affiliated men and two arrests in the centre-right coalition for political-mafia electoral substitution, tomorrow [June 21, editor's note] is a hypocritical event for us to which an immediate and uncompromising response must be given. OUR VOICE movement will be present at tomorrow morning's event to hold Mayor Lagalla accountable and to call on him to distance himself from Cuffaro and Dell'Utri, who supported him despite final convictions for mafia crimes (sentences served). And to distance himself from the policies that have been pursued in Palermo, as in all of Italy, for too many years and that favour the mafia. [...] Innocent mafia victims cannot be used to clear their conscience!" [translated from Italian]

The Palermo election records a sad negative – election turnout is at a [record low of only 41.82%](#). In the cityscape of Palermo, not only do numerous election posters stand out in the days before the election, but people have also perpetuated themselves with graffiti all over the city. These graffiti, which are always the same, call on people not to vote but to go to the sea instead (see cover picture). Where they come from and who sprayed them on – we don't know. But on this sunny Sunday, many Palermitans seem to have complied. What also seemed more important was the evening's football match against Padua, which brought Palermo to the second highest soccer league in Italy. The whole city has been in a state of celebration. Voting became secondary for almost 60% of the citizens.

And even those who wanted to vote were confronted with [various inconsistencies](#). Not only there have been too few voting papers in many polling stations, but some polling stations did not open at all or opened massively late. Already on the eve of the election, it became known that about 170 election presidents had resigned from office. Subsequently, about 80 of these polling stations could not open at all, and for the rest, the prefecture created [emergency solutions](#) during the night. And yet, there too, people were put off, turned away in front of closed doors, and asked to perhaps

try again later in the day. People who were stolen their democratic voice. The public prosecutor's office is investigating, while the bar association is even calling for the elections to be nullified. It is questionable why there has not been a single voice of outrage among the population or opposition, as this suggests a massive misjudgement and powerlessness on the part of the left.

In Lampedusa, too, it remains unclear, how the situation will change for refugees. [Filippo Mannino](#) won against the outgoing left-wing mayor Totò Martello. Mannino is a former member of the Five Star Movement. He did not initially comment on the direct handling of landings and the island's completely overcrowded hotspot. However, he sees the [reception of refugees](#) as a national responsibility and local politics as not competent. Lampedusa's task is to save people from drowning. After that, he said, it was a matter for the Italian state to take responsibility for the people who had arrived. Moreover, he has repeatedly criticised his predecessor's open handling of migration on Lampedusa.

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