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## **We Have a Plan: Feminist Plan To Combat Male Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence**

### **Non Una Meno**

#### **ABSTRACT**

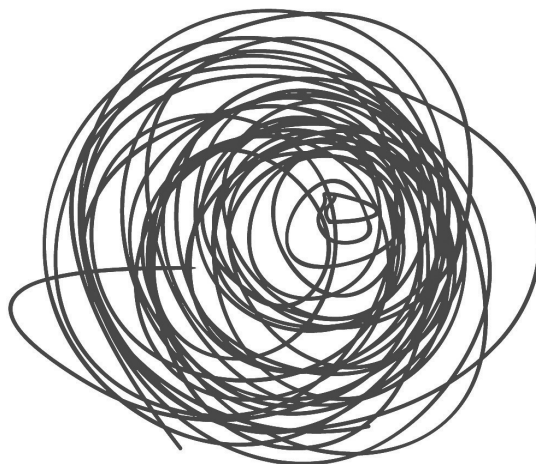
Non Una Meno is an Italian trans-feminist, intersectional, anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-capitalist political movement, independent of any party, which aims at the radical transformation of society starting from the fight against male and gender violence and against social hierarchies. It emerged in Italy in 2016 in the wake of the Argentine movement, Ni Una Menos, that campaigns against gender-based violence in all its forms. As an anti-systemic movement, it seeks to dictate a new political agenda to counter attacks from the increasingly numerous neo-conservative governments and neoliberal economic policies that exploit and marginalize people within and between countries. It claims the right of women to decide about their bodies, opposing all those reactionary logics that try to impose gender roles. It argues against sexual violence and femicides, and is opposed to all those forces of government ready to exploit violence against women to justify racist and security policies. It fights against economic violence, the blackmail of precarious work or a residence permit, which have women and migrants as an easy target. It intends to subvert power relations that generate harassment, violence, racism and economic and social inequalities. It has a plan and it will not stop until it is realised. This is its English translation.

#### **NOT ONE WOMAN LESS**

Language is not only a social structure and a means of communication; it is also a central component in the construction of identities, both individual and collective. The Italian language is gender-charged: with nouns, pronouns and adjectives that change depending on whether they are masculine or feminine, its grammatical structure reproduces and institutes a rigid binary model of gender. Moreover, it establishes the masculine as the dominant gender by using it as the universal neutral. [Ed: translator has omitted a section here, as it refers specifically to the use of Italian gendered pronouns in the text.] Yet languages change and evolve, so let us make the effort to make our language more inclusive, to bring in new words that enable us to tell our stories and cultivate our collective imagination.

This Feminist Plan to combat male violence against women and, more broadly, gender-based violence, will deal one by one with the various contexts in which gender-based violence takes place, so as to cover the issues as clearly as possible.

When we assert that violence is systemic, we mean that it appears in many different forms and across all aspects of our lives, recurrently intertwining. If we were to illustrate this intertwining, it would look more or less like this:



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## FOREWORD

The pages that follow do not simply boil down to a plea or a list of grievances. It is the fruit of collective writing by thousands of women and associations. It has arisen from the shared experiences, wisdom and methods of individual and collective resistance to the myriad forms of male violence against women, gender-based violence and violence resulting from societally-imposed gender roles that affect all of us.

To the cry of ‘Not One [Woman] Less!’, coined by our Argentinian sisters, a new global feminist movement has been booming for over a year now. Not one more woman should be killed or abused – that much is obvious, but it is not enough! We want to reclaim public spaces, make our own decisions about our bodies and our lives, and reaffirm the political force of women.

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Populous and diverse, we united to form a tide of over 250,000 that demonstrated in Rome on 26 November 2016, as our female and male allies in many other countries did simultaneously. We took back the streets, aspiring to subvert the discourse associated with the current patriarchal, neoliberal order. Following a communal assembly in Rome on 27 November 2016, the last year has seen hundreds of Not One Less gatherings take place in scores of cities, sparking a widespread process of convergence among women, feminists, transfeminists and LGBT\*QIA+ activists.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Male violence against women is systemic. It pervades all aspects of our lives. It relentlessly expresses itself, feeds off itself and reverberates, from family life and personal relations to the economic, political and institutional spheres, as well as to the social and cultural spheres, in various forms and facets: physical, sexual and psychological violence. Gender-based violence is therefore not a new emergency, nor is it a geographical or culture-specific issue.

Male violence is the direct expression of oppression in the name of patriarchy, of a system of male power that has materially and symbolically permeated culture, politics and social relations, both public and private. Gender oppression and gender inequality are structural phenomena, rather than sporadic or exceptional. They go beyond interpersonal relations, permeating and pervading all of society. As feminists, we have always repudiated these patriarchal chains (in the form of gender stereotypes, rights, the Church or other religious institutions, and even more importantly, family constructs) around our self-determination and freedom of choice; we have shown the intimate connection between these devices of dominance and the imposition of heterosexual norms.

Patriarchy, and thus male violence, have also always served to reinforce the ideals of profit and capitalistic accumulation, as well as to organise society in accordance with exploitative relationships. Such relationships run throughout society and intersect in many ways, with power and subordination devices based on gender, class and background. In this respect, we assert that there are many different patterns of violence and that femicide is only the tip of the iceberg of a deep-rooted phenomenon.

In the Preamble to the Istanbul Convention, violence against women is described as ‘a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led

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<sup>1</sup> Transfeminism is both a resistance movement and a theory that gender, arbitrarily assigned at birth, is a social construct used as a means of controlling and restricting human bodies to conform to the heterosexual, patriarchal social order. Driven by the lives and experiences of transgender people, feminists and queer people, as well as by the complex, multifaceted possible positions vis-à-vis gender and sexuality, transfeminism sees the connections between the patriarchal order and the oppressive capitalist system, which harm all individuals who are not heterosexual white males.

The term queer is intended here as a broad and inclusive concept, focused on the fact that sexual identity is not an objective fact but variable, transient terrain. It is a collection of theories and practices that subvert the rules of binary opposition (gender binary, sexual binary, etc.). In fact, the theories that challenge the idea of a gender binary or even a sexual binary are commonly referred to as queer theories: sexuality is viewed as a combination of biological sex, gender and sexual orientation, which is constructed socially and constantly reproduced by individuals. Finally, the acronym LGBT\*QIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or non-binary (\*), queer, intersex and asexual, with the ‘+’ at the end indicating an open stance towards any other self-defined identity of gender and/or sexual orientation.

to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men'. In other words, the text continues, such violence is 'one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men', and as such is 'structural' in nature. Furthermore, because it is gender-based, it also affects the entire LGBT\*QIA+ spectrum: it is violence directed against people due to their identity and/or choice of gender and sexuality. This is why when we talk about male violence against women, we must talk more broadly about gender-based violence.

Furthermore, this violence needs to be exposed as a consequence of a social imperative to reproduce and preserve the binary male/female gender model, in support of mandatory heterosexuality. This is what we call gender-based violence; it is a mechanism that forces us to identify with either a universal masculine or a universal feminine, that is, with the gender assigned to us at birth and with the designated social role for that gender. If we view gender as a socially and historically constructed notion, not necessarily connected with biological sex, then we can see how there is a common framework of violence that affects women and, at the same time, all other individuals who do not identify with the binary gender norm.

Institutional measures to combat violence, both in Italy and abroad, are often adopted in the context of emergency safety and security measures. In Italy, measures that have been implemented up to now have been inconsistent and partial. They have in fact focused only on certain expressions (albeit the most flagrant ones) of the phenomenon, such as stalking and femicide. Institutions continue to treat gender-based violence as individual acts, while at the same time they exploit it time and time again in their rhetoric to create an external enemy. The enemy may be moral decay, to justify the repression of individual liberties; it may be migrants, to legitimise racist and security-driven policies that criminalise migrants and advocate repressive actions against them. Provisions have been implemented that establish equality in theory but not in practice, that never really tackle the power structures in place and, moreover, never fully recognise political responsibility for the problem of violence.

We have developed this Feminist Plan To End Violence based on the shared analyses and methods which, as feminists, we implement on a daily basis in the spaces and places we pass through. It begins with the premise that we must overcome the ineffectiveness of political institutions in preventing and combating violence. This is an ambitious challenge, but an extremely important one. It is a plan for a struggle, a plan for action, a plan rooted in the experiences and in the history of feminist movements, of women's shelters and clinics, a plan that identifies methods, tools and demands needed to overcome inadequate approaches. Our plan rejects any interpretation that attempts to neutralise the political dimension of gender-based violence. Such interpretations are actually veiled attempts to keep women in a state of victimhood and dependence, rather than focusing on reasserting their independence and autonomy.

The Not One Less Feminist Plan To Combat Violence embraces the fundamental principles of feminist theory and practice, such as 'starting with the self' and relations between women. We have therefore adopted a position policy. Taking a position means acknowledging that we begin from a non-impartial perspective delineated by the diverse material and abstract conditions in which we live. Starting with the self means recognising differences between us, and thus shedding light on our own privileges (whether as whites, heterosexuals, etc.) in order to deconstruct the current power dynamics. As such, this plan also takes an intersectional approach. The concept of intersectionality arose from anti-racist and feminist struggles in the

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United States, denoting the way in which individuals are simultaneously arranged in society and in power hierarchies. We believe it is crucial to analyse the ways in which patriarchal, gender-based violence combines with other forms of domination, such as those based on geographical origin, culture, social background, age, abilities or disabilities. This written work has therefore been made possible by a method that makes valuable connections between different positions and different disciplinary perspectives. Over the course of a year of meetings and discussions, we examined how violence affects all aspects of our lives. This text will therefore cover these aspects one by one, envisaging potential solutions, demands and related mechanisms to fight for liberation. So, this document is a plan which aims to tackle the problem of institutionalised violence, presenting knowledge, alternative practices and concrete goals, drawing on a wealth of experiences gained in women's struggles, solidarity movements and self-management. These experiences include secular, feminist clinics and women's shelters, which arose along with the women's rights movement; they were the first real response to the problem of male violence. Run by and for women who invested their hopes, deep desires and professional skills, these spaces helped to generate a continuum of theories and practices to produce change and to reveal once and for all the widespread and structural nature of patriarchal violence. We therefore strongly feel the need to oppose criticism from those who, attuned with the dominant culture, insist on using rhetoric that neutralises the feminist approach to combating gender-based violence, that focuses on institutionalising the paths to end this violence.

Our plan confronts the sexist, discriminatory methods of imparting knowledge built into our current system of education and training. In late October 2017, the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR) published guidelines on 'teaching respect' in schools of all levels: they are based on the premise of the gender binary being set in stone and unassailable. We, on the other hand, believe that if education on differences is going to work in the struggle against gender-based violence, then it must be based on the assumption of gender complexities and value the many inevitable differences between individuals and communities, so as to steer society in the direction of equality, justice and diversity. Our plan confronts violence in medical and health services against our bodies, denying our right to autonomy, well-being and pleasure under the pretext of regulations and protocols. Women's right to autonomy in sexual and reproductive health is constantly under attack, in the form of allowing doctors to 'conscientiously object' to performing abortions, obstetric violence, and making women feel guilty if they choose not to become mothers (as is evident in the recent National Fertility Plan<sup>2</sup>). In order to guarantee autonomy for women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals, the health service provider-patient relationship needs to be viewed as a political issue, so that the concept of healthcare can regain meaning from a women's rights perspective.

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<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the Plan published by the Ministry of Health in May 2015 ([http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C\\_17\\_pubblicazioni\\_2367\\_annex.pdf](http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_2367_annex.pdf)) is to place Fertility (with a capital F) at the centre of Italian health and educational policies with the slogan 'Defend your Fertility, prepare a cradle in your future'. The Plan intends to counter the birth rate of 1.39 children per woman (2013 data, although in 2017 this had dropped to 1.32 despite the Plan), which places our country among the European states with the lowest birth rates. Besides aiming to inform citizens about the role of Fertility in their lives, providing qualified health care to defend Fertility, and developing people's knowledge about the functional characteristics of their Fertility, the Plan also establishes 'Fertility Day' – a National Day of information and training on Fertility, whose slogan is the 'Prestige of Maternity' – in order to 'reverse the current mindset and re-posit Fertility as an essential need not only of the couple but of society as a whole, thereby promoting cultural renewal on the subject of procreation'.

Our plan confronts the violence of borders, which causes many women to suffer doubly, as women and as migrants, in both the countries they emigrate from and those they migrate to and pass through. This limits their ability to escape and form strategies of resistance. Racism and sexism are in fact interrelated forms of violence and control mechanisms, mechanisms that seek to produce and preserve hierarchies and segregation. Combating racism and sexism requires more than a response based on cultural rhetoric; it requires a radical transformation of society involving the redistribution of wealth, welfare and rights.

Our plan confronts neoliberal violence consisting of social inequalities, exploitation, job insecurity and unwanted unemployment, unpaid or underpaid work, gender wage gaps and workplace segregation: all of these are conditions that materially impinge on women's right to self-sufficiency and make them all the more vulnerable to male violence. Specifically, austerity policies, public spending cuts and the dismantling of the welfare state across Europe (as well as national reforms which follow these lines) only impede women's struggle for self-sufficiency, as the effects of these policies exacerbate social, cultural and sexual discrimination. The subject of reproduction – intended here as all activities devoted to regenerating and taking care of life – is regarded as a central and eminently political issue in our plan, an issue that must involve society as whole, not just women, in contrast with the patriarchal ideology (reiterated by neoliberal ideology) which forcefully asserts that women are 'naturally' predisposed or inclined to handle such reproduction-related activities.

Our plan is therefore based on the principles of feminism and transfeminism: autonomy, intersectionality, self-defence, prevention, multidisciplinary approach, solidarity and social justice. The empowerment of women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals is a decisive, objective element in all of our methods. Taking this position means rejecting any argument in favour of a presumed 'biological destiny' of fragility, inferiority and victimhood. It means exposing the political dimension of male violence against women and gender-based violence. We want independence, not assistance. With our strategies for resistance, working together and helping each other, combined with our wisdom and strength, we can and will take back everything that belongs to us.

Enjoy the read!

## **FREE FROM SEXISM**

### **We leave and return together: feminism as the basis for interpreting the status quo**

Gender-based violence is not a temporary exception or emergency; it is the product of an age-old patriarchy. In the modern capitalist system, this patriarchy has found a new lifeblood. This began with the sexual division of labour in which women were first relegated to domestic tasks, thus establishing the nuclear heterosexual family as the cornerstone of social reproduction. Then, when women were brought into the labour market, it was chiefly through new forms of violence, disparities and injustice. Gender-based violence is therefore a structural phenomenon that affects all aspects of our lives. It is a product of what is still a highly patriarchal society, of a certain way of producing and reproducing life. It asserts itself in the earliest experiences of each one of us, beginning with the models we assimilate with regard to the family, school, relationships and work, as well as ideals conveyed through the media.

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The process of developing the present plan was long and not without conflict. We are aware that it is only the first step on a long journey to transform the world around us, because there is no sphere or aspect of society immune to the many forms of gender-based violence. Change must therefore be radical, and must start from within ourselves: we need to create new ways to engage in politics, new ways to be together. For these reasons, our collective thought process examined not only the fields of social production, reproduction, education, information, relationships and health, but also social movements, our spaces, political groups, the situations in which we would like to be and sometimes declare ourselves to be liberated, but which are not always free of sexist and violent undercurrents. Our experiences as activists and the Not One Less movement itself have therefore been part of our analysis as well. Anti-sexism and feminism are not just single issues or attributes, but rather an outlook, a way of being and a way of viewing the world that, in our view, are critical to interpreting and changing reality.

So, we need to find our collective voice, free up spaces where we can begin from the ground up, practising forms of resistance and self-management. We need to create settings where we can deconstruct power relations and inequities, places where our anti-authoritarian practices and models of social relations free of violence can be priorities, where we can experiment with new ways of relating to and taking care of one another. Only in this way will we be able to reassert a true ‘culture of consent’: a culture where consent is at the heart of every type of interaction, whether sexual, social or political; a culture where certain roles or sexual desires, preferences and opinions are never taken for granted, where no one dominates over or takes advantage of others. Consent is an open-ended process that is never resolved once and for all; it involves constant interaction based on an ability to listen and to share.

## **FREE TO EDUCATE OURSELVES**

### **Feminism goes to school: places of learning as key venues to combat gender-based violence**

We believe that preventing and combating male violence against women will require overhauling the education system. Violence against women is a systemic phenomenon that goes to the roots of society as a whole, and that pertains to all contexts of education and training, from nurseries to universities and professional training schools. As feminists, we practice and demand a radical pedagogical approach grounded in principles that reject classism, racism, fascism, heteronormativity and religion-based education; we demand an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach that can directly provide the tools needed to transform reality. We demand a perspective that sees the full set of differences between individuals and recognises how actions combine to influence people’s lives. This is why we talk about a plurality, or potentially infinite number, of differences.

Teaching about differences from a feminist point of view requires leaving the gender binary behind as our model of interpreting identity. By gender binary, we mean the theoretical paradigm, currently widespread in society, of distinguishing between the two sexes, male and female, as a static dichotomy. Human beings are classified into one of two complementary categories based on one biological fact. Males are associated with activity and females with passivity, males with reason and females with emotion, males with culture and females with nature, and so on. This gender binary is directly linked to heterosexuality and leads to the perception of any variations on this classification as abnormal or unnatural. We, however,

believe in teaching about differences in a way that explains the existence of multiple gender identities, without trying to force feelings and relationships to follow the standard of the heterosexual couple. A crucial tool in this process is language: we need to develop non-sexist language that acknowledges differences instead of silencing them into a neutral and universal masculine. Conceived as such, teaching about differences cannot be done without applying feminist methods and practices, which implies cooperative, horizontal approaches with the participation of everyone across all educational settings.

Clearly, this view is at odds with the education and training system currently in place. We believe, in fact, that the recent national education and training system reform in Italy, known as the ‘Good School’ law (Law No. 107 of 2015<sup>3</sup>), has inflicted a lethal blow to our school system. Hidden behind key concepts of innovation, autonomy, inclusion and merit, what is actually being promoted is a highly anti-democratic vision that precludes continuity in working and teaching, and renders any viable pedagogical project impracticable. This reform opens school doors up to outsourcing and the privatisation of services, through several dangerous measures which introduce the concepts of profit and entrenched privilege under the guise of meritocracy into our education and training system. From the teachers’ point of view, in addition, the ‘merit’ scheme will have a negative effect on salaries. Instead of receiving pay rises linked to their years of service, pay rises will now be based on selective mechanisms and issued exclusively to those who are deemed to have ‘merited’ them. From the students’ point of view, the massive introduction of mandatory work-school programmes is tantamount to unpaid, under-age labour, often entirely unrelated to a real educational project, but rather as a way of replacing paid workers.

One key aspect of creating truly transformational change would be to educate about differences starting in early childhood. The existing guidelines for pre-school education in Italy, which also rely on privatisations and outsourcing, do not fulfil the need for a good quality public service. Nurseries should be considered an integral part of the national education system and therefore, free public nurseries should be available to all. The trend, which began with the Good School reform, needs to be reversed, starting with the insourcing of the many people who are working under increasingly insecure conditions.

Equally problematic conditions can be witnessed in public universities, institutions which have developed around a masculine model of hierarchy, authority and deference, and which are playing a fundamental role in the neoliberal restructuring of society. Universities have been rearranged as financial entities, managed in accordance with market principles to become places from which human capital is extracted, where humans are trained to compete with each other on an increasingly erratic labour market that offers no protections. So, even the knowledge imparted by these institutions now reflects hierarchical and exclusionary reasoning.

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<sup>3</sup> Thwarting the meaning of autonomy (i.e. self-regulation by the school community), the reform entrusts the reorganisation of the human, financial, technological and material resources of the school to the so-called Executive. This new role enjoys a strong concentration of powers: executives can choose teachers from territorial registers, form their own team of collaborators (10% of the teaching staff), and reward the best teachers. Besides introducing a school-work experience model (400 hours for technical and professional institutes, 200 for lyceums), the reform provides for tax breaks (school bonuses and tax deductions) for parents who register their children in accredited private schools.

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In Italy, moreover, Gender Studies departments are practically non-existent. We are calling for this field to be recognised as an independent line of research, and affirm that spaces where feminist cultures and practices can be spread within universities should be valued, in terms of both specific courses in the curriculum and coverage of gender issues in existing courses. This coverage should acknowledge the centrality of the individuals in education and should be able to spill over to other fields and departments.

We want schools and universities in which the processes of producing and imparting knowledge are determined by the people who experience life in these arenas on a daily basis. To start with, their needs and desires should be identified. They should be able to decide for themselves how to allocate and manage resources, and be able to create cooperative spaces along with clinics, women's shelters, and feminist associations with proven experience in preventing violence and in teaching about differences (principles that match those described earlier). Schools and universities should become places where teaching and research methods and techniques can be designed and developed through cooperation.

### **Who teaches whom?**

For schools and universities to actually be able to fulfil the dual task of preventing and combating gender-based violence, we believe that teachers and educators first need to work on deconstructing internalised stereotypes, which often unconsciously shape relations in education. This arduous work can only progress by means of exchanges and cooperation between colleagues, in synergy with skilled specialists in the field, and only makes sense if it is designed to accompany and support individuals throughout their working lives.

For this reason, we believe it is essential for training in gender-based violence prevention, conflict resolution and diversity education to be set up as functional, well-funded courses available uniformly throughout the country. Such courses also need to be accessible to non-permanent staff and, most importantly, be part of teacher training programmes. In this regard, we believe that the current unpaid, mandatory national teacher training programme is absolutely ineffective, because it focuses strictly on topics established by the Ministry of Education yet outsources the service to accredited training institutions. Teaching staff should be able to choose which training programme to take and should be adequately paid for the hours spent in training.

As feminists, we believe that continuing education for teachers and students needs to be accompanied and supported by self-training methods to identify specific educational needs and desires. Self-training, starting with sharing acquired knowledge and imparting experiences, should produce a conscious revision of skills, which is essential in the teaching and learning process.

So, based on the needs identified, it should be the individuals themselves (teachers and/or students) who build networks with the services available, and these services should in turn be sufficiently financed so that activities can be widespread and effective.

### **Let's build different spaces and materials for teaching**

We believe it is also essential to draw attention to the issue of academic spaces and the most common teaching materials, like textbooks. The former are insufficient and arranged

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hierarchically (with teacher and student desks normally arranged for lecture-style lessons only), while the latter are deficient in both form and content. We believe that in order to focus on social relations in educational settings, the places and materials used need to be reshaped. It is therefore crucial to revise textbooks and other learning materials selected by schools of all levels and types, which currently convey a stereotypical and sexist view of genders and relations between the sexes. In the same way, the criteria for ‘Italianness’, beginning with presumed whiteness, need to be questioned, by rereading Italian and European colonial history and studying the connection between racialisation, sexism and exploitation, with an emphasis on the role of physical violence against women in colonisation processes.

### **Against gender stereotyping in education**

Considering the role of women working in education, it becomes clear that the latest Italian school reform has used the rhetoric of mission and sacrifice (which, along with abilities in social relations and in care, are speciously considered feminine qualities) in an effort to further destabilise and devalue these careers. The consequences of this way of interpreting the work of teachers and educators as though it were a mere extension of a natural maternal instinct, rather than a profession acquired through years of studies and training, can be measured in several areas. One example is the infamous ‘glass ceiling’ that separates career paths along gender lines. While 80% of Italy’s primary school (6-10 year olds) and middle school (11-13 year olds) workforce is female, the percentage of women falls substantially in secondary schools and universities. In addition, in the university system, there is a clear gender divide by faculty: many more women go into the humanities than technical or scientific fields, the latter generally being the disciplines that tend to lead to higher-paid careers.

We therefore demand:

- Sufficient long-term public funding of education, training and research, from the nursery to the university, with funds specifically to be allocated towards: a) remunerating both teacher-trainers and teachers in training; b) structured courses in local institutions on preventing and combating gender-based violence, providing adequate pay to the individuals involved without resorting to lump-sum tenders; c) providing job stability to teachers, educators and researchers, and raise their salaries to the European average; d) guaranteeing that research is unattached to profit-making principles, but instead puts quality and society’s real needs first.
- The abolition of the aforementioned ‘Good School’ law as well as its precursor, the Gelmini education reform legislation.<sup>4</sup> In our view, in light of the changes they have introduced in terms of both education and working conditions, these laws cannot simply be amended.
- The development of a grassroots project to draft new reforms for schools and universities, which would include changes to curricula and programmes along the lines of the principles we have espoused above.
- The opportunity to set up grassroots training and self-training programmes, which in contrast with the new national teacher training plan would be based on the principles outlined above and would see expert organisations involved in drafting and carrying out training projects oriented towards preventing and combating gender-based violence.
- Fairer distribution of positions and roles to break the glass ceiling once and for all.

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<sup>4</sup> The Gelmini reform introduced a series of legislative acts between 2008 and 2010 (during the fourth Berlusconi government) that concerned the entire school system. With regard to the University system, Law No. 240 of 2010 has profoundly changed university governance by introducing the so-called ‘corporate university’ model with the presence of private individuals and corporations on the boards of directors.

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- That the automatic pay increases for teachers be exclusively linked to their years of service.
  - That job training courses, particularly for women involved in violence recovery programmes, leave sexist stereotypes behind and stop steering women towards a limited range of ‘female’ occupational options. For this, it would be advisable to implement a support network effectively connected with companies, organisations and local public bodies, with programmes based on recognising women as important individuals, on strengthening personal identity and on developing planning skills.
  - Straightforward procedures to obtain official recognition of education degrees and professional qualifications earned outside of Italy, so as to allow foreign nationals access to qualified jobs as well as to encourage people from other countries to study and undertake research at Italian universities.

## **FREE TO TRAIN AND TEACH**

### **Building and sharing knowledge to resist the culture of violence**

To prevent gender-based violence, it is essential to have a permanent, multidisciplinary training system in place where this phenomenon can be monitored in all its facets and at all levels of action in support of women.

#### **Training for Anti-Violence Centre (CAV) staff**

Support for women who suffer abuse must meet the criteria established by the knowledge acquired by women’s movements as well as of EU and UN charters and recommendations. We therefore believe that training in this area should be run by those centres whose specific mission is based on the right to choose and to give consent, and on recognising and strengthening women’s capabilities, not on perpetuating a culture of dependency or on damage control.

#### **Training for other professionals involved in violence recovery programmes for women**

It is important to expand contact networks between CAV workers and others who come into contact with requests for help (such as teachers, educators, politicians, judges, lawyers, police officers, counsellors, healthcare workers and social workers), fully recognising the specific skills of the women who work in the centres. CAV professionals can then raise awareness by training these other professionals so that they become able to identify cases of violence (especially concerning consent in potential cases of sexual violence, which needs to be stressed as the critical grounds for treating it as a crime) and provide an initial point of refuge for women before directing them to the appropriate specialist services based on an understanding of the resources available and of the network’s operative tools.

#### **Educating and raising awareness in the media**

Toxic narratives need to be eliminated at the source, with the aim of changing our culture through widespread educational campaigns in all areas of communication, from journalism to advertising, from public announcements to the arts; educational efforts in these fields must begin in academic programmes and continue in specialist courses. Specifically, we envisage courses on male violence against women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals, on sexist and racist language, as well as on women’s history and culture, as part of permanent mandatory training

for careers in journalism, including ‘fictional’ media careers. For those involved in audio-visual and communications campaigns, awareness of gender issues is essential with regard to the use of images. Such courses should be led by feminist experts who have specific skills in the subject.

### **Raising awareness in the workplace**

Gender-based harassment, abuse and discrimination have grown more and more frequent in the workplace. Increasing job insecurity along with the destruction of fundamental workers’ rights and worker protection implemented under the latest job market reforms, combined with the general impoverishment caused by the recession, have disproportionately increased the vulnerability of women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals to coercion in the workplace, exposing them once again to these forms of violence. We therefore assert that one vital measure to prevent such violence is to develop mandatory workplace training courses for all staff on sexual abuse and harassment, sexism, transphobia, homophobia and racism. These courses would be designed by and for women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals, in conjunction with CAVs. In this vein, we hope (not merely as an after-thought) that positive ties will develop between CAVs and labour unions, with the goal of providing sufficient and efficient protection and self-defence mechanisms.

## **FREE TO DECIDE ABOUT OUR BODIES**

### **For full healthcare rights**

We regard health as psychological, physical, sexual and social well-being, and as an indicator of freedom and empowerment. Health is not simply the absence of disease or infirmity. Keeping this premise in mind, we believe it is necessary to focus on bodies and desires, as well as on material needs and conditions, in dealing with health issues. We want pleasure to be valued as a core attribute of sexual health. Sexual health should therefore be treated as more than its reproductive and medical dimensions. In this respect, we must recognise that there is institutionalised abuse of people considered ‘abnormal’, with certain conditions viewed as pathological and the individuals concerned forced to undergo medical treatment.

We therefore condemn the practice of ‘normalising’ intersex<sup>5</sup> infants as a form of violence and demand that it be abolished, partly with a view towards eradicating the gender binary. This gender ‘normalisation’ is done through surgery and medication administered to the intersex infant in order to change their internal and external genitalia to make them conform with the norm. These operations are obviously done without the patient’s consent and have very serious effects on sexual and reproductive health, not to mention psychological consequences.

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Intersex’ is an umbrella term to describe people whose sex traits do not fully fit the typical definition of either male or female. The biological sex of intersex people is considered indeterminate due to variations in chromosomes, gonads, hormones, genitals or secondary sex characteristics (e.g. breasts or body hair). Even though in general these atypical traits do not pose physical health risks (there are correlated health problems only in certain circumstances), intersex people are often subjected to surgical interventions and major drug treatments as infants or over time in order to make their bodies conform to the conventional standards of masculinity or femininity, and then assigned one of the two sexes. According to several estimates, somewhere between 1% and 4% of the population is born with intersex traits.

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By the same token, though, gender transition procedures and treatments need to be reclassified so as not to construe them as illnesses. In fact, a psychiatric diagnosis of gender dysphoria should not be required for an individual to begin transition procedures, nor should an individual be required to undergo any surgical operations before changing the declared gender on identification documents. At the same time, free access to hormone therapy to support treatment for transgender individuals should be guaranteed.

The right to healthcare, including for sexual and reproductive health, should be guaranteed for all, even in prisons, detention centres and under other conditions of limited freedom. This also means ensuring dignified conditions and access to hormone treatment for transsexuals in such places of limited freedom.

We demand the right to physical well-being and autonomy in public spaces, as a right that takes priority over the dominant concepts of security and decorum. We need to begin building a land where women and all individuals can live freely and in accordance with their own desires. We also think that access to healthcare and social services should be universal. As such, we believe these services need to be changed as soon as possible in order to be fully inclusive of individuals that may not fit the profile of a white, young and able, heterosexual, 'native' Italian. We want unconditional access to healthcare and welfare.

In particular, access to healthcare coverage for undocumented migrants should urgently be separated from residence requirements; migrants should not be required to demonstrate effective residence for three months in order to access healthcare services.

Cultural mediation and translation should be guaranteed in all healthcare institutions, social services and public bodies. We argue that mediators from secular, feminist backgrounds should be present at each point of healthcare, in order to facilitate recognition of gender-based violence in its various forms. Such mediation must aim to oppose treating individuals who use the services like children, leaving room for empowerment in its various forms.

Furthermore, sexual and reproductive health should be guaranteed for sex workers, who should be given the information, preventive tools and care that will provide them with support yet leave them independent, with freedom of choice.

We interpret the current relationship between healthcare rights and the right to autonomy as part of a gradual dismantling of the welfare system, where the public healthcare system is being corporatised, privatised, and destabilised. The connection between healthcare employees' working conditions and patients' well-being needs to be highlighted as a necessary step towards improving relations between all parties involved. Empowerment can be asserted by adopting and sharing the knowledge and resources which form the basis of medical authority and the imbalance between people in care and specialised personnel, with the aim of breaking down the barriers that divide the two.

Debates need to be opened up about biomedical knowledge and how it can be passed on, in light of transfeminist knowledge, recognising that each person cared for is the bearer of knowledge that derives from the self. Based on the principle of empowerment, we oppose monopolies of knowledge and seek to adjust the imbalance between providers and users of healthcare services.

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**Much more than (Law) 194<sup>6</sup>**

Of the 94 hospitals in Italy that have an obstetrics and gynaecology department, only 62 (or 65.5% of the total) perform abortions. Conscientious objections to abortions in the national health service are illegitimate because they constitute an infringement of women's right to autonomy. We argue that all women (whether Italian-born or migrant) should have full access to both surgical and medical abortions if requested. Given our priority of empowering women, we advocate de-hospitalisation of abortion through an increase in the use of abortion pills. National protocols for administering abortion pills need to be amended and made consistent. Medical abortions<sup>7</sup> should in fact be permissible up until the 63rd day of pregnancy without hospitalisation, and may even be administered by obstetric personnel in clinics.

We demand an end to administrative fines against women who resort to self-procured abortions outside of the legal time limit, because such fines constitute a deterrent to seeking medical care for women experiencing complications during pregnancy, and therefore tend to undermine women's health and well-being. The right to autonomy should be upheld even in cases where the choice is for irreversible infertility, such as tubal ligation or vasectomy.

**Against obstetric violence**

Over the last 14 years, about a million Italian women (21% of those surveyed) stated that they have experienced obstetric violence during labour or childbirth. Obstetric violence means the effective expropriation of a woman's body and reproductive processes by the healthcare system. This type of violence may be in the form of inhumane treatment, abuse of medication, or the pathologisation of natural bodily functions, and it undermines the woman's autonomy and ability to make free decisions about her body and sexuality, with negative effects on her quality of life. Examples of obstetric violence are derision directed at many women in the delivery room, negative judgements expressed about decisions to abort, imposing a supine position to give birth, episiotomy (incision of the perineum during labour) even when not necessary, and induced labour without consent. Even refusal to administer epidural anaesthesia can be considered obstetric violence. Obstetric violence should be recognised within the legal framework as a form of violence against women with regard to reproductive and sexual health.

Women's freedom of choice must be ensured by promoting a culture of the physiology of pregnancy, labour, the post-partum period and breastfeeding. Statistics about obstetric violence should also be compiled and published. To guarantee full autonomy during pregnancy and

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<sup>6</sup> Law No. 194 of 1978 made the voluntary interruption of pregnancy legal in Italy during the first 12 weeks. In the following period it is possible to access abortion services only for therapeutic purposes related to the health of the mother or the foetus. Article 9 of the law gives medical and health personnel the right to abstain from performing an abortion in the event of a previously declared conscientious objection. The widespread use of conscientious objection, practised by about 70% of health personnel, effectively limits access to abortion.

<sup>7</sup> Medical abortions are accomplished through the administration of two drugs, RU-486 (which terminates pregnancy) and a second pill that aids the expulsion of tissues that develop during pregnancy. The process lasts between one week and nine days, after which the normal menstrual cycle gradually resumes. The success rate of medical abortions is between 92% and 99%. In Italy it is currently practised up until the 49th day of pregnancy (whereas in the rest of Europe it is allowed up until the 63rd day) and is administered in hospital, normally accompanied by a three-day period of hospitalisation. Medical abortion should not be confused with the morning-after pill or five-day-after pill, which are emergency contraceptive drugs rather than abortion drugs.

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labour, we want to open public maternity homes<sup>8</sup> that would be run by obstetricians and also affirm that women should receive reimbursements from the national health service related to home births.

### **Against security-based rationales in healthcare institutions**

In order to avert the medicalisation and institutionalisation of interventions on behalf of women who suffer abuse, we assert that any initiative to combat violence against women should actively involve secular and feminist CAVs. In fact, we believe that interventions with an exclusively assistance-based, emergency and/or repressive slant are inadequate and ultimately harmful, as they do not take into account the feminist reasoning that such violence is a structural problem.

For this reason, we oppose the so-called ‘Code Pink’ emergency room access code reserved for women who have suffered violence, an initiative involving coordination between the local public prosecutor, regional government and health services. We argue that this programme should be reorganised completely in order to eliminate any security-based rationale that imposes mandatory courses of action,<sup>9</sup> which may be detrimental to women’s autonomy and freedom of choice.

### **Family planning centres and feminist collectives**

Family planning centres need to be rethought as political, cultural and social spaces in addition to their function of providing social and healthcare services, in a way that values their historical role as places set up by and for women. These centres can be re-politicised by taking back control of the service and ensuring that they are open to users across different age groups, cultures, backgrounds, desires and abilities, and encourage affirmation of the transfeminist knowledge generated and embodied by the individuals involved.

We advocate a requalification of family planning centres (‘consultori’) by hiring new permanent staff members with diverse skills and professional backgrounds, so as to guarantee that each one has a full, multidisciplinary team at work. We request increased funding for the national network of family planning centres, in order to maintain a standard number of clinics per capita in both urban and non-urban areas across the country, as well as to ensure that the opening hours are sufficient to make them available to as many people as possible.

Family planning centres must guarantee access to free contraception; provide information about and work to prevent sexually transmitted diseases; offer free tests and screenings for all individuals; and encouraging knowledge-sharing about issues including non-reproductive

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<sup>8</sup> Non-hospital medical centres designed to support women in pregnancy, childbirth and the post-partum stage. The layout of these centres resembles a home, and they are run entirely by obstetricians, ensuring not only continuity of care but also the opportunity for obstetricians, women and families to meet, train and learn.

<sup>9</sup> The ‘Code Pink’ mandates the intervention of police officers or the judge where a woman has suffered violence, before she has even had the opportunity to consult with anti-violence workers and support centres. In 2019 the Italian parliament approved the so-called ‘Code Red’ against violence, which imposes even stricter routes for complaints and more severe penalties for violation of Law No. 69 of 2019 (‘Amendments to the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedural Code and other provisions concerning the protection of victims of domestic and gender violence’). The criticisms of feminist organisations regarding the provision concern the repressive nature of the law which reduces women to mere objects of protection and limits their autonomy to choose alternative escape paths.

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practices. The centres should also provide services for women undergoing the menopause, without treating it as an illness and without neglecting the aspect of sexual pleasure.

In this respect, we believe it is crucial for clinics to resume providing sex education and relationship education, services that disappeared under the reforms to school education introduced by Berlusconi's Education Minister Letizia Moratti. They should do so in schools of all types and levels, in order to refocus on the sexed body and to resist the construction of power-based relationships and heteronormative discrimination.

We believe it is important to encourage the new and increasingly numerous feminist and transfeminist 'consultorie',<sup>10</sup> intended as spaces for experimentation, self-exploration, mutualism and a redefinition of welfare, so as to rethink and rebuild ways of spreading new self-management experiences and taking back control of services. These are places where collective action strategies can be outlined for empowerment, for combating gender violence and for advocating health and sexual pleasure.

## **FREE FROM ECONOMIC VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND JOB INSECURITY: FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT**

### **Gender-based violence amidst economic crisis**

The economic issues of work and welfare are central to the struggle against systemic violence. There is a close connection between the ongoing move towards capitalist, neoliberal structures and gender violence, which is perpetuated in such an environment as a result of new ways of segmenting and fragmenting work, marginalisation, forced unemployment, exploitation and impoverishment; the welfare system is being gradually dismantled under the pretext of debt restructuring. These developments affect all of us, but women are hit particularly hard, as a paradigm of sexual division of labour has re-emerged with renewed intensity: this is the patriarchal paradigm, in which women are 'naturally' assigned the activities associated with reproduction and care, stuck once again within the confines of domestic walls or, otherwise, shouldering the double burden of work both in and out of the home, and often segregated by being offered work only in certain sectors of the economy. Tackling violence in a way that addresses these larger issues means posing the question in terms of prevention; it means identifying a priori how women can be guaranteed material autonomy and self-sufficiency, which would remove them from the potential spiral of violence that often stems from economic dependence, exploitation, job instability and a lack of welfare and public services.

### **The contemporary workplace**

The so-called feminisation of work in today's world is not just related to women's entry into the job market, but a more complex process: first, nearly all jobs are now taking on qualities

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<sup>10</sup> We call 'consultorie femministe' places of empowerment, of free and conscious choices about health and sexuality. Developed through a transfeminist take on the advice centres of the 1970s, these centres are not set up simply as health services, but rather as places for women to organise and take back control of their lives through a new awareness of the body and by sharing knowledge. They are therefore places to socialise widespread practices of consent, sharing responsibility with respect to male violence and harassment. They are places where sex, emotions and gender relations can be discussed among equals, where the right to personal and political transformation can be practised.



that in the past were characteristic of ‘female’ jobs (including the obligation to be fully available to work at all times, work offered intermittently and often for no pay); second, specific means of exploitation have developed that put individuals themselves to work, as well as their lifestyles, their capabilities in social relations and in taking care of others.

The feminist movement demonstrated how, in a capitalist system, the sphere of social reproduction<sup>11</sup> and care have become directly productive activities. However, if productive work is quantified and remunerated (albeit for ever decreasing wages), reproductive activities, which for a long time now have been much more than just domestic activities connected with production itself, are still not counted as economic output, nor recognised on a social level as work. When it is counted, or formally recognised, it is underpaid and exploited.

In other words, the wealth we produce in many forms and on many levels on a daily basis is effectively taken away from us and not redistributed. In addition, the statistics on salary gaps, female unemployment, harassment and sexual abuse in the workplace are troubling. In Italy, the gender wage gap is 43.7% (Eurostat 2014), while the official female unemployment rate is 12.5% and 44% of women are not in paid work (Istat, 2017). Further, research in 2016 found that, 1,403,000 women between the ages of 15 and 65 had been subjected to sexual harassment or sexual blackmail over the course of their working lives. (Istat 2016). The potential for sexual blackmail has risen exponentially due to the recent job market reform (especially the Jobs Act<sup>12</sup>): with a drastic erosion of worker rights and job contract protections, women and already vulnerable individuals are the most susceptible to blackmail in the workplace. This is all the more true for those whose work is not legally or formally recognised, and we are thus calling for immediate protections and guarantees for these individuals. Also, it has not yet been fully recognised how this intensified exploitation, job instability and double burden of productive and reproductive work will impact our physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive health.

We therefore demand:

- An EU-wide minimum wage, in order to combat low pay, the systematic gender pay gap, wage ‘dumping’ (paying lower wages in certain geographical areas) and job segregation against women and migrants, which is related to women’s experiences elsewhere in the world. In the United States, for instance, a key point on the agenda has been to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.
- A self-determination income, unconditional and universal regardless of one’s work situation, citizenship and residence status. The self-determination income should guarantee financial independence and therefore material support for women recovering from abuse (whether domestic or in the workplace). More generally, this would be an effective means of preventing gender-based violence, as it would free us from blackmail and exploitation in the workplace, from instability, from harassment. In this vein, we consider the Italian Government’s recently

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<sup>11</sup> By social reproduction, we mean the set of activities that leads to the regeneration of human life in a given historical and social context; these activities are closely correlated with the dominant mode of production. Reproductive labour refers to both the labour required for human reproduction (i.e. pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding) and the attention and care needed to sustain human life (procuring food, physical care and healthcare, education, training, social relations, emotional and psychological support, and looking after domestic spaces and goods).

<sup>12</sup> The so-called ‘Jobs Act’ reform was introduced by the Renzi government with Law No. 183 of 2014, and a successive series of decrees. The reform is inspired by the principle of flexibilisation of the labour market and, whilst providing for a series of incentives for hiring workers, it has also widened the basis for dismissal without just cause and de facto eliminated reinstatement in the event of unfair dismissal.

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introduced ‘Entry Income’ scheme entirely inadequate,<sup>13</sup> as it is nowhere near universal or an assurance of autonomy and self-determination. It is instead merely a paltry measure to reduce poverty in Italian households, even though, as we are well aware, the home is actually the primary place where violence originates; the government measure is not addressed at individuals and is subject to a requirement to be actively seeking work, which tends to be useful only to companies and managers as an opportunity to exploit low-cost or even free labour.

### **Against neoliberal residual welfare**

Spending cuts and the complete dismantling of universal welfare, which provides a safety net in the event of intermittent work or unemployment and provides real support to women recovering from abuse, makes the current socioeconomic context all the more problematic and inadequate. In this respect, we wholly reject the neoliberal model of welfare restructuring whereby women (and often migrant women) bear the burden of all the services that are no longer provided by the public sector, by means of job segregation mechanisms. Similarly, we wholly reject both corporate welfare (as it is privatised welfare that is often given only in exchange for lower wages) and policies geared at improving the so-called work/life balance, to the extent that such policies reinforce, rather than fight against, the idea that women should by definition be taking care of domestic work.

We therefore demand:

- Universal welfare, free and accessible for all, and thus not based on the current family model. It should recognise the social rights of women, as well as migrants, homosexual, transsexual and intersex individuals. The welfare system should be adapted to contemporary lifestyles, needs and relationships. It should free people from exploitative and underpaid work. Public services should be free, secular and non-invasive, respecting individual choices. We think it is also crucial to officially recognise self-managed autonomous welfare structures such as anti-violence centres and feminist collectives, places founded upon feminist experiences that can subvert forms of social reproduction that impose and set rigid gender identities and roles. In our view, essential welfare measures include: restoring funding for and enhancing public services for young children, granting universal access to these services (currently, priority is given to working parents, which all too often causes forced unemployment among mothers without permanent jobs); bolstering services and infrastructure to support disabled women, as deficiencies in these areas make disabled women all the more susceptible to violence; real policies to support care for family members, the elderly and other individuals, in a manner that considers reproductive labour and care activities as an issue that concerns society as a whole, not only, and not ‘naturally’, women; more generally, building new social infrastructures to free up time in our daily lives, instead of keeping us confined within domestic walls; guaranteeing the right to housing, especially as job instability constitutes a major obstacle to procuring a stable, dignified housing situation for women and vulnerable individuals;
- Policies to support maternity and shared parenthood: more specifically, the unconditional extension of required compensation for parental leave (both maternity and paternity) to workers of any type (not just employees or those with an official job contract).

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<sup>13</sup> For a critique of the government scheme, see <https://nonunadimeno.wordpress.com/2019/02/05/reddito-di-cittadinanza-una-critica-femminista-di-nudm-roma/>

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**Mutualism and solidarity**

In order to end the fragmented, isolated contemporary workplace, we believe it is crucial to emphasise the importance, as part of feminist activities, of building new solidarity and mutual aid networks. In other words, we need to emphasise, in opposition to the barbaric culture of individualism and solitude, the power of being together, the power of supporting each other, the power of sisterhood. Mutualism and solidarity are crucial in the struggle against employer retaliation tactics, against blackmail, harassment, discrimination and any other form of violence in and out of the workplace. This entails building networks that connect campaigns for mutual support; creating resistance funds for these campaigns and to aid workers in distressing situations. It entails creating spaces (drawing upon the history of feminist movements that have called for, built and run services by and for women, expropriating skills and decision-making from male dominance) that put the focus back on women's own needs and desires, that value listening and mutual aid, exchanges of knowledge and self-training about the rights we have and the rights we want to attain.

**Feminist strikes**

We think it is vitally important to continue the process that began on 8 March 2017 with the global women's strike, a process of reinjecting meaning into the strike as a prevalent method in the feminist struggle; in other words, rekindling the idea that going on strike is a tool everyone can use, not just labour unions. Strikes can involve both productive and reproductive labour; they can go beyond the boundaries between different professions and trades, beyond national borders, to unite the many faces of the job market and joblessness, rather than breaking it into even smaller pieces. We are therefore talking about strikes to voice social and political grievances, to reject neoliberal violence of exploitation and job instability, to challenge current hierarchies based on sex and gender norms and the social roles imposed by these hierarchies; it is in this sense that we call them 'gender strikes'.

**FREE TO WRITE OUR OWN HISTORY****Preventing violence through feminist and transfeminist reporting**

The media play a strategic role in sustaining or discouraging male violence against women. The way in which violence is reported in the media informs collective perceptions, which often interact with legal mechanisms: it is deplorable that women struggling against violence are often re-victimised, defiled and discredited in media reports.

The Istanbul Convention of 2011 recognises the media's central role, by setting standards for 'participation by the media' in Article 17, where the media is encouraged to work to prevent violence against women. Also, recommendations addressed to Italy in 2011 by the UN Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW – the international treaty of the same name was ratified by Italy in 1985) and in 2013 by UN Special Rapporteur Rashida Manjoo, cover professional training in the media, avoiding stereotypical representations of women and raising awareness about women's rights as ways of combating male violence against women.

The documents cited above have certain limitations in common: an ‘essentialist’ definition of women, a heteronormative view of society that ignores violence committed against LGBT\*QIA+ individuals, as well as the lack of an intersectional perspective linking gender-based violence to violence based on class, race, age or disabilities.

The present plan seeks to achieve a feminist transformation of the rationale, policies, aesthetics and rhetoric used in the media on gender-based violence, to become a tool for those working in the communications industry, to aim for an Italian media that no longer expresses and perpetuates toxic, sexist narratives that only help reproduce a culture of widespread violence.

For this reason, we wish to eliminate all forms of underpaid, clandestine and/or exploitative work in the communications sector. This is because toxic reporting is to some degree due to the fact that workers in the sector can easily be intimidated or blackmailed, in addition to a lack of proper training.

### **Guidelines for non-sexist reporting**

The principles expressed here can be transposed into a code of conduct that would hopefully be adopted by the entire media and communications sector:

- Violence is structural and needs to be reported as such. Presenting violence as exceptional circumstances, or as unconnected individual episodes due to particular circumstances and individual factors, should be avoided.
  - Violence stems from power disparities and is closely connected with a systematic attempt to suppress women and individuals who do not conform to gender norms. Therefore, conscious use of language that is respectful of genders and women’s history should be encouraged.
  - Violence is never an act of love: the sexist culture behind violence must be recognised, by doing away with reports of ‘a fit of rage’, ‘jealousy’ or ‘crime of passion’ to question the paradigm of romantic love and conflict between partners.
  - Violence is ubiquitous: it is important to air reports of all types of patriarchal or heterosexual violence, that is, not to simply concentrate on the forms that are the most ‘news-worthy’ because they are shocking or obscene, such as femicide and sexual abuse.
  - Violence is not imported: we should avoid depicting violence as a phenomenon perpetrated by men belonging to other, more ‘primitive’ cultures or to ‘depraved’ backgrounds, as this creates panic and distorts perceptions in a way that encourages the use of the phenomenon to justify racist, repressive, security-state-driven ideas.
  - Violence happens mainly within families and close relationships: we need to challenge the rationale where assaults by strangers in public are much more likely to become news, something paralleled in films and TV series, which tend to feed the myth that the danger comes from ‘outside’.
  - Violence does occur in public places too: however, it happens most often in well-lit workplaces, delivery rooms and migrant identification and deportation centres, not dark city streets.
  - Violence is not a spectacle: especially in visual media, it should not be presented as normal or picturesque, or fetishised by turning violated or dead bodies into objects of erotic contemplation.
  - Women first: anti-violence centres and feminist associations should be sought out and cited as primary sources of information, following their respectful methods of interacting with women who have suffered abuse.
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- Women are not passive, predestined, isolated victims: we should avoid perpetuating such stereotypes and instead report on women who resist violence, on transfeminist solidarity networks.
  - People who have suffered from gender-based violence are never at fault: any form of blame-shifting should be avoided, such as insinuations about an inability to leave an abusive relationship or about a victim/survivor of violence ‘asking for it’ due to imprudent behaviour (behaviour that would only be considered imprudent for females and restricts their autonomy).
  - Violence does not separate ‘good’ women from the ‘bad’ ones: portraying violence as a risk taken by women who work as prostitutes, by those with non-conformist sexual identities or simply by women whose qualities are not aligned with standard femininity, is once again tantamount to blaming and punishing those who have suffered from violence.
  - Men who commit gender-based violence are not monsters, beasts, crazy or depressed: we should avoid depicting violent men as pathological, as this is another way of treating such violence as an individual phenomenon and diminishes the criminal’s responsibility for his act.

## **FREE TO MOVE, FREE TO STAY**

### **No to racism and institutional violence, yes to intersectional feminism**

Institutional and social racism, limitations placed on human mobility and specific violent conditions experienced by migrant women (both as migrants and as women or LGBT\*QIA+) are central issues that concern the entire Not One Less feminist movement. We started from our own lives, aware of the different positions each of us has in terms of geographic background, class, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and abilities. We want to combat all forms of sexism in its intertwined relationship with other control mechanisms such as racism and capitalism, where the same hierarchical structures are in place as those that claim to separate us into migrants and citizens. Faced with this rhetoric that imposes a binary of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, we instead build alliances across the various forms of oppression, like we did in the global International Women’s Day strike.

We therefore practice intersectional feminism: recognising that there are differences in the conditions each of us faces, we have decided to band together against patriarchal violence, racism, class-based violence and ethnic violence. Taking this position means, above all, recognising that migrant women, through resistance and the rejection of racist violence, challenge the patriarchal order every day, on borders (both external and internal), in detention and deportation centres, in ‘welcome’ facilities, in the workplace and in the home. Taking up the struggle together also means avoiding and rejecting any racist or security-based rationale that manipulates the phenomenon of violence against women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals. So, our approach is not sector-specific but intersectional; it is inclusive of issues that migrants face, well aware that freedom of movement and the struggle against institutional and social racism are pertinent to all women’s lives.

### **Against the border system and the institutional ‘welcome’ system: freedom of movement and autonomy**

Our demands are framed within a critique of, and opposition to, the global system of borders, as a function of the struggles and methods of resistance adopted by migrants. We demand that freedom of movement and unconditional permission to reside should be granted anywhere in

or outside of Europe. For this reason, we are critical of the institutional migrant ‘welcome’ system and reject the emergency-style rationale applied to the issue of immigration: this rationale renders migrant women invisible in the name of urban decorum and militarises everyone’s lives. We condemn the victimisation of migrant women because we acknowledge their daily struggles both inside and outside of our borders.

We oppose deportations, detention, blackmailing migrants for residence permits, institutional racism that destabilises life for everyone, and repressive policies that marginalise trans and other non-conformist individuals.

One goal of ours is to abolish Italian and European laws that limit freedom of movement, starting with the Minniti-Orlando and Bossi-Fini laws,<sup>14</sup> and moving up to international border control outsourcing deals included in the Dublin system<sup>15</sup> and the ‘migration compact’ as well as Italy’s bilateral agreements (e.g. with Libya and Turkey). Another goal is to abolish administrative detention in Europe and in countries to which migrant detention is outsourced; to shut down the detention and deportation centres and any other structure that limits freedom of movement or the right to autonomy. We therefore call for the repeal of all legislation that criminalises migration and solidarity between migrant networks, beginning with the ‘crime’ of illegal entry and settling, as well as laws against aiding and abetting migrants.

### **Unconditional residence permits and jus soli**

We want to see unconditional, unrestricted European residence permits – without any requirements pertaining to family, studies, work or income. We therefore argue that expedited and simplified application procedures should be implemented, with lower requirements for women immigrants to obtain citizenship. We oppose unpaid and/or forced labour in order to ‘earn’ the right to remain; we oppose all forms of exploitation and any hierarchy aiming to split us up and separate us. We want citizenship for all, including application of the jus soli principle to extend citizenship rights to all children born and/or raised in Italy, and we demand the right for parents to reunite with children already residing in the country.

We also demand that residence permits for work purposes (under Article 22 of the Italian Consolidated Immigration Act) no longer be subject to verification concerning previous criminal offences. Permission to stay should be guaranteed for everyone who requests it on the basis of work actually carried out, regardless of other residence rules; similarly, appropriate legal mechanisms need to be put in place for immigrants to claim any unpaid wages.

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<sup>14</sup> The so-called Bossi-Fini law was introduced in 2002 (Law No. 189 of 2002) with the aim of tightening the system of detentions and expulsions of migrants. Its abolition has since become a shared goal of social movements, also for the conditionality that it imposes between regular work and the right to remain in the country. The so-called Minniti-Orlando law was introduced in 2017 (Law No. 46 of 2017): it has affected the asylum system by severely limiting the right to appeal against negative decisions. In the months following the publication of the NUDM Plan, NUDM has also criticized the immigration regulations introduced by the so-called Salvini Law (Law No. 132 of 2018): see ‘Why freedom of movement is our struggle! Why we say No to the Salvini Security Decree’ at <https://nonunadimeno.wordpress.com/2018/11/20/perche-la-liberta-di-movimento-e-una-nostra-lotta-perche-diciamo-no-al-Decree-safety-salvini/>

<sup>15</sup> The Dublin System provides that the Member State through which the asylum-seeker first entered the EU is responsible for examining their asylum claim.

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## **Against manipulation of gender-based violence to promote racist and state security policies: towards shared feminist political spaces**

It is necessary to end the political manipulation of ‘native’ women’s bodies for racist purposes and the manipulation of migrant women’s bodies for security purposes. It is equally necessary to liberate cities and towns from ghettoisation and gentrification, and instead build shared feminist political spaces. Opposing the manipulation of gender-based violence to promote racist, security-based and nationalist policies, opposing institutional violence by the police, courts, immigration centres and border patrols, and all other devices that repress our autonomy and speech – against all this, we are building and taking back our physical places, redefining them in political, anti-sexist terms, to devise resistance and self-management strategies. We are adopting linguistic tools and struggling for greater participation by migrant women; we are organising demonstrations with them to give visibility and expression to our demands, and we are designing feminist political paths.

## **FREE FROM ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE**

### **Abusing the land hurts us too: fighting for the well-being of both our bodies and our ecosystems**

Women’s bodies are not detached from the places they live in, from the land they walk on and build upon, from the relationships they forge with other bodies, human and non-human, near and far, or from the economic structures they endure and/or help create. We see a need within our plan to address the topic of environmental violence against women, against all human beings and against nature itself, intended as the biological tissues that bond us all together. We view the anthropocentric, male-neutral, heterosexual current as a patriarchal control device that attempts to pass off as ‘natural’ a system of oppression and exploitation.

We will define ‘environmental violence’ as an act that inflicts harm on the well-being of our bodies and on the ecosystems we live in, through biocidal exploitation, through the use of substances that damage the health of microorganisms, plants and animals. Environmental violence includes denying (through dominant concepts of security and decorum) local areas the possibility of self-determination or freedom of movement and expression. It also includes the militarisation and occupation of spaces for the exploitation of natural resources. It includes failing to recognise the interdependence of living things, and the coexistence of humans and their surroundings, by adhering to a colonial view of science that focuses on defining and regulating bodies, ethnicities, cultures, institutions of hierarchical relations and control.

### **Transfeminist spaces and activities against neoliberal exploitation**

From a transnational and decolonial feminist<sup>16</sup> point of view, we must begin by redesigning areas as spaces where women and all individuals can live freely and in accordance with their

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<sup>16</sup> The transnational and decolonial feminist movements are pluralistic movements that can link up with other issues and other geographical areas, thanks to leadership from many women in many different parts of the world. Transnational feminism seeks to overthrow/change/supplement historical narratives, which too often remain colonial and fail to account for the experiences of non-white, non-wealthy women. Decolonial feminism recognises that forms of oppression vary widely and depend on contingent conditions like geographical location,

own desires. This implies restoring social reproduction of life and collective care as central political issues, restoring priority to bodies and their sensitivities, rejecting patriarchal and neoliberal ideas according to which such activities are solely and naturally women's duties. We wish to embark upon a common transnational route in which transfeminist methods are exercised and exchanged with the aim of building decolonialised, peace-oriented economic policies, alternatives to the biocidal extraction policies of neoliberal capitalism, which triggers war, military action and territorial occupation in an attempt to exploit both natural and human resources. Joint actions are thus envisaged with women who work locally against pollution and large infrastructure projects, in defence of better health for all. We also reassert that there is a connection between rural and urban areas, in production and distribution, in the use of resources and land, in the creation, management and protection of public goods.

### **Overcoming the anthropocentric model**

Living and building networks between women's movements across the world means taking on the responsibility to collectively envisage alternatives to the current economic system, learning from one another in cooperatively run activities and in land redesign to protect biodiversity, public goods and organic farming, as well as decolonialised urban spaces that shun the concept of dominion over nature, of the dominance of one class over another, of one people over another, of men over women and other individuals, of one species over another. Given this premise, we argue that it is necessary to move away from the anthropocentric paradigm: the subjugation and exploitation of nature, of human beings and other species, and the patriarchal structure are all in fact intertwined in this paradigm's conception of relationships as being founded on control and ownership.

The anthropocentric view is that Man (which has never really been a neutral term) is central in the universe, the absolute master of all around him, putting him in a dominant position over all other living beings and all balance on earth. Constructing and imposing this view as 'natural', universally accepted and shared is the most effective way for man to preserve his identity, supremacy and power. As such, we choose an eco-feminist view to deconstruct anthropocentrism based on women's concrete experiences.

## **FREE TO BUILD FEMINIST SPACES**

### **Distinct spaces that empower and liberate**

If we wish to cultivate time and space for healthy, safe living, we must not criminalise, repress or remove people by force. We need to renew derelict neighbourhoods, increase the number of establishments run autonomously by women, redesign and revive urban areas based on women's needs, and build liberated spaces for all. We must blend the demands and practices of feminism, transfeminism and anti-sexism with existing mixed political spheres. At the same time, we argue for the need for autonomous places for feminist, transfeminist and queer politics, where strength, relationships and subjectification can be constructed. These places will interact with various social and political groups to build and share the tools feminism has to

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historical period, local patriarchal culture and ethnic groups; in the same way, this perspective posits that there are many different ways women can resist and struggle against oppression.

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offer, in order to emphasise the forms of violence and hidden privileges that take place in politics.

We want to push for the development of such places of feminist and transfeminist empowerment, places for reflection and collective action. We believe it is vital to build anti-sexist inroads in political groups and self-managed organisations, so as to enable us all to gain a clear understanding of sexism and violence, as well as to share ways of recognising them. It is equally crucial to combat mechanisms that negate and minimise episodes of sexism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia and lesbophobia, and any associated complicity. We want to reassert and spread self-defence as a decisive means of growing and developing growth, awareness, power, strength, security and transformation, both personal and collective. Self-defence is in fact collective action that empowers women by creating bonds of solidarity and sisterhood, overcoming the heteropatriarchal paradigm that posits women as weak, fragile victims. Self-defence can be physical, verbal or psychological, depending on one's physical traits, personal history and personality. Unlike classic 'female' self-defence methods, feminist self-defence is based on a level playing field (it is not taught, but rather co-created) and organised by women themselves (through exchanges of apprenticeships, training sessions and the like). It triggers processes that change one's perception of strengths and weakness, of one's role in interpersonal relations. Taking up the tools and methods of feminist self-defence, our goal is to foster self-training and reflection in these spaces, rejecting the daily expressions of sexism and working to show that violence is an issue for everyone.

### **Anti-Violence Centres (CAVs)**

In the current era, marked by a major revival of patriarchal violence and virulent neoliberal politics, there is a strong need for anti-violence centres to reassert their distinctive identities to resist attacks from those who, fully aligned with the dominant culture, choose to discuss violence under a neutralised approach using institutionalised methods. We define anti-violence centres as all centres, help desks, shelters, halfway houses and other spaces occupied by and run by women. These are places with a political imprint, secular and feminist, run entirely by women with the main goals of triggering cultural and political transformation, where action can be taken against the structural dynamics that lead to male violence against women (whether cisgender,<sup>17</sup> transgender or lesbian). In this vein, CAVs welcome and support individual recovery from abuse; they provide training and prevention to raise local awareness; they set up a complex system of networks designed to benefit women. A vital role within CAVs is that of the worker who welcomes visitors: the professional approach of this individual must be aligned with the shelter's political principles.

### **The CAV welcome worker**

The centre worker who welcomes visitors is a complex figure: her training is acquired exclusively from within anti-violence centres, and her work is based on forging a relationship between women and on rejecting gender-based stereotypes and discrimination. Regardless of her professional profile, she is educated in politics and feminism, including in intersectional knowledge. All women who work in shelters make up an integrated team with multidimensional skills. Work is shared, with women and their relationships placed at the heart

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<sup>17</sup> 'Cisgender' refers to a person whose gender assigned at birth based on biological sex matches her/his own self-perceived identity and the gender that person wishes to be.

of the project by showing appreciation for their wishes. It is therefore important to acknowledge the work women do in shelters, so that the necessary emphasis on their political involvement and independence from institutions does not result in job instability and/or unpaid work.

### **Protocol and methods in CAVs**

CAVs adopt a methodology aiming towards autonomy, never assistance, based on a connection between women and on an interpretation of gender-based violence as a structural socio-political phenomenon, not an isolated emergency. Each pathway to recovering from violence starts on the initiative of the woman involved. The aim is to reconstruct the events endured and to empower women<sup>18</sup> while still respecting each woman's wishes, values and needs, without prescribing mandatory routes or steps. Listening with empathy and maintaining the right distance are skills that arise from the worker's own ability to understand and manage her own emotions, to leave room both for women's stories and for their moments of silence, without imposing personal judgement.

In CAVs, women can find someone to listen to them, a warm welcome and hospitality, as well as company, the restoration of self-esteem, internal resource activation, legal support, psychological help, parenting support, and support for financial self-sufficiency (whether directed towards training, work or home). These centres ensure personal privacy, secrecy and anonymity, and are free of charge.

The entire working strategy is based on the enhancement of positive elements and on valuing each woman's inner resources which, thanks to the change in the environment, will grow stronger. Women are supported through the process of re-entering the job market, as well as in negotiating a legal separation settlement with the best possible conditions for the women themselves and for their children. These centres reject family conciliation (that is, seeking conflict resolution in a relationship) in cases where violence against women and children is present, as per the Istanbul Convention, and this should be considered one of the distinctive traits of our methods.

### **Resources and funding**

Given that numerous and diverse actions are required for a concrete, effective struggle to end male violence against women, appropriate funding and resources have to be found and used in a way that benefits women; funding needs to value and support CAVs.

We therefore demand:

- Adequate resources and funding for the requirements identified by CAVs themselves. Public funding should provide permanent contracts to cover annual running costs. The funding contract should cover all services provided and should not be subdivided into portions.

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<sup>18</sup> The term empowerment has been used in the international feminist movement with reference to a process of developing autonomy and power, through two main phases. The first is the realisation of being in a state of oppression and taking control of one's inner power and potential to make autonomous decisions. In the second phase, an individual or group of individuals pursues one or more goals that involve overthrowing the status quo and/or changing one's condition.

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- Abolition of the 30% funding limit on new CAVs (as under Law No. 119 of 2013),<sup>19</sup> which is currently applied without monitoring the effective needs of pre-existing shelters, many of which are closing down due to a lack of resources.
  - Auditing by the Italian Department of Equal Opportunities (DPO) of previous years' expenses.
  - Budgets for local bodies should take three-year horizons into account, so as to ensure continuity and effectiveness in projects and actions aiming to combat violence.
  - Funding should be allocated by the DPO, not left up to the discretion of individual ministers.

### **Against institutionalisation of abuse recovery**

The State-Regional Planning Committee sets minimum requirements for CAVs if they wish to receive national recognition and government funding. These requirements leave a lot of room in terms of what type of organisation qualifies and who can manage one, thus allowing the setting up of 'neutral', assistance-based services without any specific skills and without the ability to welcome women and accompany them towards autonomy and empowerment.

These requirements furthermore fail to recognise the principles laid out in the Istanbul Convention<sup>20</sup> and ignore the specific role and experience of CAVs.

In this regard, we argue that the definition of CAVs, of the entities called upon to manage them, and of their workers' roles and training, should reflect the principles expressed in the present plan. We also oppose the identification of structural standards and specific requirements for opening hours that are not linked to whether a shelter has the personnel to cover those hours and that have nothing to do with the qualitative factors of the task.

The strategic framework presented by the DPO in September 2017 actually grants the government the right to determine CAVs' political choices, effectively excluding CAVs from the control room. In the same document, it is also evident that there is a substantial inconsistency in the specific attention given to migrant women, refugees and asylum seekers for the multiple forms of discrimination they face. The policies adopted by the current administration are oriented towards security-based logic and towards pushing away instead of welcoming. Lastly, by blocking the 'Italian route' of migrant boat landings, thousands of people have been left susceptible to the abuse and violence of human traffickers.

The full national strategic picture amounts to only a declaration of intent, given that there is no clarity on the financial commitments provided to cover the variety of actions envisaged.

The 'guidelines' of the September 2017 DPO framework are exclusively security-oriented, not protective. As such, we are calling for the guideline for healthcare workers on 'Diagnostic and therapeutic treatment' to be scrapped. Although this guideline requires collecting useful information for a potential criminal case, it also provides for women to be 'x-rayed' and

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<sup>19</sup> The table attached to Law No. 119 of 2013, 'Fund for policies relating to rights and equal opportunities' provides for 30% of the fund's annual budget to be distributed among anti-violence centers on a national basis.

<sup>20</sup> The preamble of the Istanbul Convention recognises 'the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanism by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men'. Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2011.

involved in an unwanted process, as soon as they discuss violence suffered at the hands of their partner, or even if they do not discuss it. This method brings back the view of women as fragile beings that need protection, who have psychological problems and need to undergo both treatment and diagnoses that could even turn out to be counterproductive for them.

In this respect, we also reject the admissibility of evidence in a more cogent manner when the woman ‘in cases of suspected and/or declared mistreatment’ does not want to undergo ‘procedures to gather biological evidence’.

## **FREE TO BE AUTONOMOUS**

### **Routes to empowerment and recovery from abuse**

#### **Violence and the right to asylum**

We demand and reattach political meaning to the right to asylum for women fleeing any form of economic, physical, psychological or patriarchal violence in either their country of origin or transit country. We apply a feminist perspective to fleeing from trafficking that rejects both the predominant repressive language and the idea that protecting women is dependent upon reporting themselves as victims. Exploitation and trafficking are forms of systemic violence against women, sustained by the system of borders which limits autonomy and freedom of movement. We demand freedom of movement throughout Europe for asylum seekers. We also oppose any reasoning that limits freedom of movement and empowerment during asylum-seeking procedures and subsequent procedures.

We therefore demand:

- Effective access to procedures and recognition of international protection<sup>21</sup> for women fleeing any form of violence. To this end, we explicitly request recognition of women and LGBT\*QIA+ people as a specific social group for the purposes of international protection legislation.
- The political choice of keeping the national anti-violence and anti-trafficking laws separate should be called into question and critically re-examined. There should instead be a feminist approach in dealing with both human trafficking victims and asylum seekers, in which the users are active agents in their abuse recovery strategies.
- The legal tools for combating human trafficking should be redefined based on a view of this practice as violence and exploitation, regardless of evidence of coercion.
- Recovery from abuse and exploitation cannot be tackled through repressive policies; instead, a self-determination income, rights and public services must be guaranteed.

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<sup>21</sup> International protection is an institution, regulated at European level as well as by the Geneva Convention, which provides, under certain conditions, the recognition of refugee status or subsidiary protection. In Italy, the procedure that must be undertaken to gain such international protection may result in a permit of stay for humanitarian purposes. At present, despite some progress in the relevant legislation, there is no explicit recognition of women or LGBT\*QIA+ people as a ‘specific social group’ that is susceptible to persecution pursuant to the Geneva Convention. Furthermore, applications for international protection based on acts of violence against women, such as domestic violence, sexual violence or human trafficking (whether in the form of prostitution or forced labour) are unlikely to be accepted by the Local Committees for asylum rights.

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- Permit of stay protections should be extended to women who suffer any form of violence (as per Article 18 bis of the Consolidated Immigration Act<sup>22</sup>), including if it is episodic and including violence in the workplace, detaching this aspect from the legal or criminal proceedings and ensuring effective access to undocumented women in the country.

### **When children witness violence**

Women are expected to be ‘good mothers’ who never cause harm; by contrast, fathers are considered satisfactory even if they act violently – this is a clear violation of the Istanbul Convention. To think that violence and parental duties are separate matters causes further damage to both women and children. That is why the Convention states that ‘in the determination of custody and visitation rights of children, incidents of violence [...] are taken into account’, so as not to ‘jeopardise the rights and safety of the victim or children’ (Title V, Article 31).

CAVs help to reconstruct emotional bonds to prevent or intervene in cases of aggressive behaviour, relational isolation or emotional inhibitions, so as to foster a renewed sense of safety and childhood. Support of any kind cannot work unless mothers and children feel protected and the episodes of violence stop. Violence often intensifies when family cohabitation ceases: children are often used by fathers against mothers. Moreover, witnessing violence within the family, directly or indirectly, harms children’s ability to understand, express and control their emotions; it damages the father-child relationship and has clear repercussions on the parental relationship. A father who acts violently is not a good father. It is therefore necessary to put an end to the legal culture of reducing male violence against women to conflict within the relationship, which dismisses the essential fact that it is a form of violence and diminishes the credibility of women who suffer it.

We therefore demand:

- Legislative amendments on shared custody (Article 337-quater et seq. of the Italian Civil Code), to declare it inapplicable in all cases of domestic violence, together with other forms of custody such as alternating custody, which cause prejudice and deny women economic rights (by losing their right to the family home and to financial support), often making them dependent upon and financially subordinate to their ex-partners, providing the latter with additional leverage for blackmail.
- That paternal responsibility concerns can be grounds for removing and/or limiting joint custody.
- In cases where domestic violence is involved, solutions based on internal family arbitration or other alternatives to a court settlement are ruled out.
- Juvenile and civil judges are prevented from relinquishing their duty to assess and reach a decision by delegating these powers to subject experts and social service personnel; in other words, decisions must not be based on psychological diagnoses of women who have suffered abuse and their consequent parental capabilities. Such assessments should instead focus on the father figure, to avoid putting an abusive man on the same plane as an abused woman.
- Full, effective protection of minors by simplifying procedures to obtain identity documents, school places, as well as access to psychological support services and healthcare.

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<sup>22</sup> Article. 18 bis of Law No. 268 of 1998 provides for a residence permit for victims of domestic violence. However, access to the residence permit is conditional upon prosecution, and the definition of domestic violence excludes that deemed to be of an ‘episodic character’.

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**Financial self-sufficiency in work**

Being able to seek and find work are crucial steps on the path to liberation and autonomy for women recovering from abuse. These are activities that break the feeling of isolation, that help women regain self-esteem and a better understanding of their own skills, abilities and shortcomings. Finding work helps ensure true independence, especially from a financial point of view.

In order to guarantee effective support towards self-sufficiency through work, it is necessary to:

- Set a minimum income for self-determination which provides concrete aid and speeds up the abuse recovery process and/or prevents the risk of a deterioration in mistreatment.
- Prohibit dismissal from work, offer help to ensure safe journeys to and from work, ensure the right to return after leave, guarantee flexibility in working hours, protect wages and suspend taxation on self-employed women.
- Amend legislation on leave from work due to violence (Article 24 of Legislative Decree No. 80 of 2015), which currently rules out domestic service workers and does not ensure anonymity in the criminal justice process. It is also necessary for both employers and the national social security institute (INPS) to spread the word that this legislation exists.
- Make a percentage of confiscated commercial goods available to women entrepreneurs.

**Autonomy in housing**

In the process of recovering from abuse, the issue of housing is very important and requires sufficient solutions – not intermittent or emergency measures – that take into account external and individual socioeconomic conditions as well as various different housing options. In general, residence and domicile need to be recognised for all women, both natives and immigrants. It is then essential to adjust time frames for temporary housing in shelters and introduce measures to support housing autonomy.

The current period of 3-6 months afforded to women recovering from abuse to stay in shelters is insufficient due to the deteriorating material economic conditions and to the erosion of the welfare state: these factors have made the process of recovering from abuse more difficult and more lengthy.

We therefore demand:

- The extension of the accommodation period in shelters to 12 months, making the timeframe flexible enough to meet the specific needs of each woman.
- The separation of accommodation or transfers to a new shelter from the system of Social Services charges, which should not replace women in shaping their abuse recovery processes.

One of the major difficulties women encounter in seeking autonomy is access to affordable housing, especially given that they are not normally offered leases without regular pay slips or other adequate financial guarantees.

We therefore demand:

- A nationwide extension of Rome City Council Decision 163, which provides for a four-year rent subsidy for women recovering from abuse. For this purpose, the situation of having to
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leave a household to escape domestic violence should be equated, in terms of severity and urgency, with eviction notices. This measure has already been adopted with successful results in Rome.

- A public guarantee fund should be set up to help women obtain leases to rent a home; CAVs and associations could manage these funds, acting as guarantors.
- For public housing waiting lists, maximum points should be assigned to women who have just completed an abuse recovery programme in a CAV.
- 10% of all public-owned properties should be allocated to become semi-autonomous housing managed by CAVs.

## **FREE TO ASSERT AND DEFEND OUR RIGHTS**

### **We are free, not victims**

The changes that women can make by participating in processes to assert rights have always been a tool for transformational improvements, in terms of both women's individual lives and the entire social fabric. Despite women's relentless work to recognise and stigmatise situations of violence against women, both in Italy and around the world, and despite repeated 'declarations of intent' made by numerous political actors and institutions in courtrooms, in civil and criminal judgements, we have witnessed reactionary tendencies that blame women for the violence they suffer. This has enormous legal, psychological and social consequences, discouraging women from reporting violence for fear of facing accusations. We are witnessing the repression of women's human rights, not only through these acts of stigmatisation and blame, but also through the criminalisation of feminist solidarity networks, and that is an extremely serious matter. It is therefore essential, also from a legal and judicial perspective, to acknowledge the work performed by women's shelters and by women's advocacy services in general; these entities have always given meaning and value to the autonomy and empowerment of women and defended the inviolability of their bodies.

These fundamental principles should inspire action to combat male violence, which affects not just women but a diverse range of people who are discriminated against for their gender identities or choices. We advocate women acting as leaders in their own liberation from violence, sexism, gender prejudices and roles imposed by a society that is still patriarchal.

In this regard, the Council of Europe Convention on combating and preventing violence against women and domestic violence (the aforementioned Istanbul Convention), which Italy ratified with Law No. 77 of 2013, should be fully and urgently implemented in order to achieve the following goals:

- Recognising and combating all forms of male violence against women, including psychological and economic violence, as well as sexual harassment in the workplace, on the web, on social media (currently not officially considered violence), and the witnessing of violence endured by children.
- Reducing court case timescales, partly by giving priority to domestic violence cases, something not currently in place in civil proceedings and hardly ever applied in criminal proceedings.
- Providing initiatives that focus on the victim of the crime, not as a 'weak' individual that needs to be protected, but as an active individual with rights. Thus, making the reporting of violence a requirement to press charges (which limits women's autonomy) should be opposed,

as should the extension to gender-based crimes of mechanisms that strip individuals of their rights (e.g. in legislation on actions taken to make amends for a crime, Article 162-ter of the Italian Penal Code, where instead of being a critical factor, the consent of the injured party is considered irrelevant). It is important to establish fair, uniform parameters for real compensation for damages that do not diminish the severity of the crime and restore dignity and prominence to women.

- Ensuring immediate implementation of the EU Directive on compensation for damages for victims of violence, putting the burden on the State to disburse all amounts set by the courts in favour of victims in both civil and criminal proceedings, and ending bureaucratic impediments to accessing funds.

## **FREE TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT**

### **Statistical studies, monitoring, databases and autonomous analytical tools**

In order to best spread awareness of the structural nature of male violence against women, we need to:

- Set up, at all levels, databases that will provide qualitative and quantitative information about all forms of gender-based violence (domestic, workplace, in healthcare, in detention centres and in administrative matters), providing a vital basis for policy action.

- Develop a map of CAVs that illustrates the current supply, that meets the criteria of both national regulations and the Istanbul Convention, and that employs the definition of CAVs asserted in this plan.

- Effectively monitor violence through aggregated local and national data. Anonymity remains a critical issue, as it is one of the key principles and cannot be equated with typical privacy protection issues. Following women through any tracking system, as certain institutions insist on doing, runs the risk of becoming a means of controlling and limiting the autonomy of women, limiting their freedom of choice and negating the policies of CAVs. Providing aggregate data will instead serve the purposes of understanding specific local and regional needs, conducting economic assessments with a view to resource allocation, evaluating the suitability of services offered, as well as developing prevention and awareness-raising campaigns.

- Establish a National Feminist Observatory, an independent body that would represent women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals and monitor violence directed against them in the media (the press, television, radio, advertising and social media). The guidelines for appropriate representation of women and LGBT\*QIA+ individuals and for appropriate reporting of gender-based violence should be adopted as this body's analytical principles. Experiences of monitoring gender issues in the media in Italy currently do not meet the basic criteria for effective results, as the most significant ones focus only on television, at limited times of day and/or only on samples of programmes. The quality and independence of this Observatory should be supported through public funding.

- Create and implement shared methods of grassroots inquiry and illustration in places where full implementation of Law No. 194 of 1978 (on abortion rights) is not guaranteed, as well as where personnel voice 'conscientious objections' in areas where there is no legal right to do so (e.g. by pharmacists).

- Create a database to monitor the gender pay gap, signalling wage disparities and wage discrimination, not only between men and women, but also with respect to LGBT\*QIA+



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individuals, using diverse and broader analytical criteria (such as including non-employed people and looking at annual income instead of just hourly wages).

- Build a database on harassment in the workplace based on both qualitative and quantitative criteria. The data currently available vastly underestimates this phenomenon. This is because for fear of threats, blackmail, or job loss, women frequently not only fail to report incidents, but even find it difficult to talk about the situation.
- Launch a survey on the relationship between job instability, new forms of exploitation and health (physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive).
- Build a catalogue of court sentences on gender-based violence cases, enabling a continual exchange of skills and experiences between the various courts in the country.
- Ensure that professionals in the court system remain observant of codes of conduct with regard to exercising the right to defence, avoiding any form of secondary victimisation of women in civil and criminal proceedings.
- Develop methods of mapping, re-appropriating and redesigning urban spaces to renovate abandoned areas.
- Create maps of and publicise places where women can go that are free of sexism, gender-based violence, harassment and any form of discrimination.

## CONCLUSION

This Feminist Plan To Combat Gender-Based Violence is the product of a full year of work. Yet it is more of a starting point than a finish line. It is not a script set in stone; it is an open, multifaceted field of resources put together from the intersections of many individual women, collectives, groups, local assemblies, CAVs and associations.

Still a work in progress, it is given shape by a collective body that contains all of our anger and all of our love for the world. It arose from a desire to dream and conceive of another life, another set of human relations, societies free of male and gender-based violence, and free of the power structures, both economic and cultural, that sustain this violence.

From this point forward, this plan will be a foundation for our mobilisation and struggle. We will relaunch it in the many Not One Less committees that have formed over the course of this year and that, we hope, will form in the future, everywhere we live and pass by – at home, at school, in universities, in workplaces, in public spaces – with an awareness that male violence and gender-based violence concern all of us, and that eliminating them will entail profoundly transforming the status quo.

We will continue to leap back and forth between the public and private spheres, to question the most intimate relationships, the shapes of our bodies and our social structures. We will continue to go on strike from both productive and reproductive labour in a rejection of the neoliberal violence of exploitation and job instability. We will continue to go on gender strikes to subvert sexual hierarchies, gender norms and societally-imposed social roles. We will continue to build transfeminist solidarity networks in order to heighten the global wave of women, to break the material and symbolic borders with which they want to divide us. If our lives do not have value, then we will not reproduce this sexist society.

This plan is a summary of complex analyses and proposals that have grown out of this movement over the course of the long year that has just passed. It is an important opportunity

that helps us to more clearly see the lines of oppression that surround us, and the lines of resistance that can break them.

We have found a collective voice and we will not stop using it.

We have a plan and we are the force that will achieve it.