

The intervention by ISDE Italy in the ECHR proceeding concerning possible violations of human rights in the area of Taranto

According to the European Commission, “The ILVA steel plant in Taranto [Apulia, Southern Italy] is the EU's largest steel plant and, at full capacity, could produce as much as Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, and Luxembourg did together in 2015” (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-115_en.htm).

The production of scientific knowledge clearly depicting environmental damages and health risks in the area of Taranto started in the '90s and continued uninterrupted until today. In the year 1997 the area of Taranto was defined by the World Health Organization “at high environmental risk” and for this reason was therefore included by the Italian Government (year 1998), with a specific law (DPR 196/1998), in a list of 14 sites which required remediation. However, neither effective and complete control of sources of pollution nor remediation procedures have been performed in the area of Taranto until today, with about 20 years of avoidable health risk/damage. Additionally, a total of ten laws approved by the Italian Government between the year 2012 and June 2016 were particularly aimed to continue the industrial operations irrespective of the documented epidemiological excesses and of the scientific evidences.

For these reasons, several citizens living in Taranto presented an application to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) of Strasbourg, requesting the Court to verify the presence of possible violations of the Human Rights in their living area due to inadequate environmental and health policies by the Italian Government.

In July 2016 Dr. A. Di Ciaula, on behalf of ISDE Italy, requested the Court to intervene in the proceeding (technically: third part intervention), and the Court allowed to submit written comments (see attachment). The document sent by ISDE Italy to the Court was aimed to provide the Court with information about the current environmental and health status in the area of Taranto, and about the negative effects of specific national laws on the environmental safety and on the respect of human rights in the same area.

The proceeding is now in its last phase and the final response of the Court is expected within few months.