



# ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

WITH LAWYERS  
IN 21 COUNTRIES

EJDM Europäische Vereinigung von Juristinnen & Juristen für Demokratie und Menschenrechte in der Welt

EJDH Asociación Europea de los Juristas por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos en el Mundo

EJDH Association Européenne des Juristes pour la Démocratie & les Droits de l'Homme

EGDU Associazione Europea delle Giuriste e dei Giuristi per la Democrazia e i diritti dell'Uomo nel Mondo

Equality Privacy Social Rights  
No Racism Peace No Torture No War  
Self-Determination of Peoples Democracy  
Human Rights Rights of Migrants

Bologna, Düsseldorf, London, Rome, Vienna, 04 October 2021

## Against the criminalisation of refugees and their supporters

ELDH condemns the decision of the Locri tribunal to inflict a criminal sentence of 13 years and two months on the former mayor of Riace, Domenico Lucano. This is another shocking example of the criminalisation of refugees and their supporters by Italian judges, and also of the abuse of courts for reactionary political purposes

Lucano became known all over Europe for providing abandoned houses to hundreds of migrants. He was mayor of the small town on Calabria's southern coast from 2004 to 2018, and provided hundreds of migrants with abandoned houses belonging to residents in the remote district of Riace Borgo, in the hilly hinterland, who had emigrated. Lucano and his supporters in Italy and around the world argued that this had breathed new life into the "dying village,"

Lucano's only "guilty" act has been that of courageously promoting an innovative policy of hospitality and integration for migrants. The policy led to the sustainable development of the de-populated territory, as well as fighting against the mafia and racism.

The disproportionately high penalty inflicted on the former mayor stands in clear contradiction to other decisions of the Supreme Court. The sentence is almost double that requested by the prosecutor and resembles more of a vengeance meted out by local traditional powers, including the mafia, than to a legitimate sentence by magistrates in accordance with Italy's constitutional system.

His arrest came a week after Italy's former far-right interior minister, Matteo Salvini, announced a series of anti-immigration measures, which included slashing funds for migrant reception and integration. It also followed the suspension by the public broadcaster, Rai, of a TV show about Riace during the investigation.

The judges of Locri applied the Erdogan model, which is the pitiless repression of every humanitarian action, with the clear intent of annihilating the powerful example of Lucano and his administration in Riace as defenders of human rights.

ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

Co-President: Professor Bill Bowring, London | E-Mail: [bill.bowring@eldh.eu](mailto:bill.bowring@eldh.eu) | Phone +44 (0)781 048 34 39

Co-President: Barbara Spinelli, lawyer, Bologna | -E-Mail [avv.barbaraspinelli@gmail.com](mailto:avv.barbaraspinelli@gmail.com) | Phone +39 051 4116817

Présidente d'honneur: Professeure Monique Chemillier-Gendreau, Paris

Co-Secretary General: Thomas Schmidt (lawyer), Düsseldorf | E-Mail: [thomas.schmidt@eldh.eu](mailto:thomas.schmidt@eldh.eu) | Phone +49 (0)172 68 10 888

Co-Secretary General: Serife Ceren Uysal (lawyer), Vienna | E-Mail: [serifecerenuysal@gmail.com](mailto:serifecerenuysal@gmail.com) | Phone +43 664 4853347

Postal address: ELDH | Thomas Schmidt | Platanenstrasse 13 | D – 40233 Düsseldorf (Germany)

Website: [www.eldh.eu](http://www.eldh.eu)

For the extraordinary regional elections in Calabria this Sunday, Lucano is the top candidate on the left-wing list for a seat in the regional parliament in Catanzaro. According to current case law, anyone who has been sentenced to imprisonment in the first instance may not run for a political mandate, so Lucano's candidacy for Sunday's elections is invalid. Therefore, Lucano's conviction can also be considered as an electoral interference.

ELDH expresses its solidarity with Domenico Lucano, reiterating its longstanding commitment to justice, the rule of law and humanity.

ELDH expects the Locri decision to be overturned and reversed on appeal, to conform with the model of justice based on the rule of law and on humanitarian principles.