

Berlusconi: migrants rob banks and are a social time bomb

Italy

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Silvio Berlusconi has claimed that 600,000 illegal migrants in Italy are a "social bomb ready to go off" after a Nigerian asylum seeker was arrested for killing an Italian woman.

The thousands of migrants, the former prime minister claimed, were living "hand to mouth or from crime", and he suggested that they were responsible for most bank robberies.

Mr Berlusconi, 81, who is leading the opinion polls before elections next month, looked set to ignore demands to halt inflammatory campaign speeches after a neo-Nazi gunman went on a shooting rampage in central Italy on Saturday, wounding six migrants.

Luca Traini, 28, who has a Nazi tattoo on his forehead, told police that he wanted to murder the migrants in the central town of Macerata in revenge for the killing of an Italian girl last week, allegedly by a Nigerian asylum seeker.

"I said this is the last straw, if no one is doing anything about this, I will take them all out," he told police after he gave himself up.

The shooting led to criticism of the anti-migrant League party, which is campaigning in a coalition with Mr Berlusconi, when it emerged that Mr Traini stood as candidate for the party in local elections last year and attended a party dinner last month.

Matteo Salvini, the League's leader, who has called for 500,000 illegal migrants to be expelled, blamed the shooting on politicians who have allowed migrants rescued in the Mediterranean to be taken to Italy.

In an apparent attempt to outdo his coalition partner, during an interview on one of his TV stations Mr Berlusconi increased the number of migrants that his party would expel to 600,000. "We consider it an absolute priority to take back control of the situation," he said.

[Benedetto Della Vedova](#), a junior for-

eign minister, said: "This shows the game involving a 'moderate' Berlusconi and the 'extremist' Salvini is total fiction." He called Mr Berlusconi a "Trojan horse for xenophobic politics".

Experts believe that the true number of illegal migrants in Italy is about 500,000. A further 200,000 are in reception centres having applied for asylum. Mr Berlusconi claimed that only 5 per cent of migrants arriving in Italy qualify for refugee status, although government figures reveal that the proportion receiving one

of the three types of protection status that Italy offers was 41 per cent of applicants in 2015 and 2016. In a speech last month Mr Berlusconi said the proof that hungry migrants were behind a wave of burglaries was that they ransacked the fridges of their targets.

Since his arrest, Mr Traini has told police that he was bullied as a child for being overweight and was traumatised by his parents' separation.

He claimed that he had been romantically involved with a woman whose life had been ruined by drugs supplied to her by African dealers in Macerata. "All blacks are drug dealers, I have beaten up two in the past, after they ruined the life of the girl I was in love with," he said.

When he heard on the radio on Saturday about the arrest of a local Nigerian drug dealer on suspicion of killing and dismembering a woman, he said that he decided to kill as many migrants as possible.

After firing 30 shots during his shooting spree, he is said to have gone to the site where the woman's body had been left in two suitcases and set up a statuette of the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.



Berlusconi: i migranti derubano le banche e sono una bomba sociale