



Silvio Berlusconi under siege after sex and drug allegations

Italian Prime Minister [Silvio Berlusconi](#), besieged as never before by sex and drug allegations, went on the offensive today, dismissing claims against him as "made-up stories" and hinting the mafia may have framed him in reprisal for recent police successes.

"No one today can rule out with certainty that certain things that are happening are not the fruits of an underworld vendetta," he told a meeting of his Freedom People (PdL) party's leadership. "In what other country in the world would the head of the government have to defend himself against a barrage of made-up stories?"

The most recent of the stories that Berlusconi claims are untrue was told to prosecutors on Sicily by a 27-year-old ex-prostitute, Nadia Macri, who says she twice supplied him with sexual services. The second time, according to newly leaked extracts from her deposition, was in a swimming pool at Berlusconi's home at Arcore near Milan, with a girl who was "young. Very young: 17-18 years old".

Just as damaging is Macri's claim that, when she flew – along with 25 or 30 other young women – to his Sardinian villa, "There was also grass to smoke in the rooms. The girls said the [marijuana] was transported by Berlusconi's jet."

Berlusconi has been at the centre of a series of scandals in recent years, including claims by a prostitute, Patrizia D'Addario, that she had sex with him in 2008. Berlusconi has denied paying for sex. There was also controversy over his friendship with a teenage model, Noemi Letizia.

Neither of the most recent allegations, however, would seem to make the prime minister liable to criminal charges, even if they were true. The age of consent in [Italy](#) is 14. Prostitution is not illegal, though profiting from it is. And there is nothing in what is so far known of Macri's statement to indicate Berlusconi himself supplied the drugs allegedly used at the holiday estate where he has hosted Tony Blair, Vladimir Putin and other world leaders.

The biggest legal threat arose from another young woman, Karima el- Mahroug, a then 17-year-old belly dancer who is reported to have told prosecutors in Milan that she attended three parties at Arcore, but denies any sexual entanglement with the prime minister.

Mahroug was detained by police in May on suspicion of stealing €3,000 (£2,620), but after a call from the prime minister's office, she was handed over to a Berlusconi acquaintance – his former dental hygienist, who was this year elected to the Lombardy regional parliament.



Yesterday, the chief prosecutor of Milan decided there were no grounds for bringing a case against the prime minister for abusing his position, which is an offence in Italy. The ruling appeared to clear the way for today's upbeat counter-blast in which the media mogul told his lieutenants: "We're not going to take steps back, but five leaps forward."

That was a reference to the five points in his government's programme for the rest of the legislature. Awkwardly for Berlusconi, one is to provide improved support for the family.

His most famously loyal supporter, the presenter Emilio Fede, denies supplying girls to him. "Since he lost his mother, his life has become much sadder," Fede said. "If one evening a week he wants to enjoy himself, I don't see any harm in it."

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Key Vocabulary

1. grounds for-(n) - Reason for thinking, believing or doing something.
2. liable-(adj) - Financially or legally responsible.
3. underworld-(n) - Criminal society.
4. deny-(v) - To say something is not true.
5. besiege-(v) - To attack from all sides.
6. threat-(n) - Message or signal of plan to hurt or punish.
7. detain-(v) - To stop someone from leaving.
8. barrage-(n) - A fast and heavy attack by words, guns or cannons.
9. provide-(v) - Give or supply something.
10. upbeat-(adj) - Happy, optimistic.
11. frame-(v) - To arrange for an innocent person to be seen as guilty.
12. statement-(n) - Something that is said.

Summary Writing

Write a short summary of the article, including only the main points. Use your own words as far as possible. Write between 50 and 100 words.

Vocabulary exercise

Complete the sentences using one of the words from the key vocabulary above. You may need to change the form of some of the words.

1. An umbrella _____ protection from the rain.
2. His parents had a _____ of questions when he returned home late from the party..



3. He was _____ by the police.
4. He made a _____ to the police.
5. She hid the money in his room to _____ him for the robbery.
6. He felt very _____ after the meeting.
7. Many immigrant groups have joined the traditional mafia in NYC's _____ businesses.
8. I am _____ for the cost of fixing the car, since I crashed it.
9. Stealing office furniture is _____ losing your job.
10. The dog growled as a _____ to the stranger.
11. The city of Troy was _____ for ten years.
12. The police say he was drunk but he _____ it.

Answer Key

Example Summary

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi denied claims that he had frequented prostitutes and suggested that the Mafia might be responsible for the stories. Even if the allegations are true they do not necessarily mean that the Prime Minister has done anything illegal, and charges against him for abusing his position have been dropped by prosecutors in Milan. Berlusconi repeated his intention to continue with the government's legislative programme.

Vocabulary

1. provides
2. barrage
3. detained
4. statement



5. frame
6. upbeat
7. underworld
8. liable
9. grounds for
10. threat
11. besieged
12. denied