A right-leaning news website that publishes false and misleading content to advance nationalist and anti-migrant views.

Ownership and Financing

ImolaOggi.it is owned by Armando Manocchia, the president of Una via per Oriana, an organization founded in memory of the late Oriana Fallaci, a renowned Italian journalist who in the last years of her life expressed anti-Islamic views in books such as “The Rage and the Pride,” written after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

In 2009 and 2010, Manocchia represented the right-wing political party Lega Nord, currently known as Lega, as a city councilman in the town of Borgo Tossignano.

The site runs advertisements and solicits donations.

Content

Imola Oggi, which retains the name of an online newspaper that covered news in the northern Italian town of Imola, primarily publishes news and opinion on Italian politics and immigration.

The site prominently features stories on crimes where migrants or other foreigners are the suspects. Typical headlines include “Bologna: a foreigner spits on a woman, then robs another one” (“Bologna: straniera sputa contro una donna, poi ne rapina un’altra”) and “Genoa, Ecuadorian kills his wife: sentence halved because she ‘deceived’ him” (“Genova, ecuadoriano uccide la moglie: pena dimezzata perché lei lo aveva ‘illuso’”). On a typical day in April 2019, eight of 10 news stories on the homepage were related to immigration, and negatively portrayed foreigners and migrants.

ImolaOggi.it publishes original articles written by Manocchia and a few other authors, and republishes content from right-leaning newspapers, as well as news agencies such as ANSA and AdnKronos. The site frequently rewrites headlines to add opinion.

The site also publishes other international news, and local news for Imola and the surrounding area.

Credibility

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

- Does not repeatedly publish false content
- Gathers and presents information responsibly
- Regularly corrects or clarifies errors
- Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly
- Avoids deceptive headlines
- Website discloses ownership and financing
- Clearly labels advertising
- Reveals who’s in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest

The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information.

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

More information.
Imola Oggi has regularly published false and misleading content to advance views opposing immigration and, in particular, Muslims. For example, in January 2016, Manocchia wrote a false article headlined “Mosques in Italy are unconstitutional and yet Qatar builds 33 of them” (“Le moschee in Italia sono incostituzionali ma il Qatar ne costruisce 33”). The Italian Constitution contains no restrictions against mosques or Islam. The constitution, rather, states that “all religious denominations are equally free before the law” (“Tutte le confessioni religiose sono equalmente libere davanti alla legge”) and says that denominations other than Catholicism can practice organized religion.

In April 2016, the site republished a story first posted on luccaindiretta.it, headlined “Tuscany: ASL confirms, migrants possible cause of meningitis epidemic” (“Toscana, “Asl conferma, migranti possibile causa di epidemia meningite”). The article cited a document issued by a health agency Azienda sanitaria locale (ASL), to advance the claim that meningitis cases in Tuscany were linked to migrants from Africa. But the document did not say that migrants had caused the “epidemic.” Instead, it recommended that people who were traveling to countries where four types of bacteria that can cause meningitis exist, including sub-Saharan Africa and Saudi Arabia, get vaccinated for those types of bacteria. The vaccine document did say that some of the bacteria had started circulating in Italy, but did not say that migrants were the “possible cause” of the meningitis cases. Italian officials later confirmed that the meningitis cases in Tuscany came from viruses that were common in Europe, not Africa.

Other articles advance unproven conspiracy theories without evidence. For example, in an April 2019 article, “Quousque tandem abutere patientia nostra?” (a Latin sentence that means “How long will you abuse our patience?”), the author claimed that a “planned invasion” (“una pianificata invasione”) of migrants was coming and that Italy would become a “fetid open sewer” (“fetida fogna a cielo aperto”). Manocchia, responding to a NewsGuard inquiry on the article, said the article’s claim is true. “If one doesn’t see it, it means one is blind,” he told NewsGuard in a telephone interview. “It’s a policy that starts from the top, from the new world order, from the United Nations and its Chinese boxes, and that for years now have been
organizing what I call an ethnic substitution” (Se uno non la vede, significa che è cieco. E’ una politica che parte dall’alto, dal nuovo ordine mondiale, dalle Nazioni Unite e le sue scatole cinesi, che da anni stanno organizzando quella che io chiamo una sostituzione etnica”).

In a February 2018 article, “Macerata: who really shot the migrants?” (“Macerata: chi ha davvero sparato ai migranti?”), Manocchia cast doubt on the identity of the shooter of six migrants from Africa, a day after neo-Fascist suspect Luca Traini had confessed to the shootings. Manocchia’s story claimed that the media covered up news of a second suspect, writing, “As often happens, the first news, those not yet censored, speak of the hunt for two men, aboard a dark Alfa 147” (Come spesso accade, le prime notizie, quelle non ancora censurate, parlano della caccia a due uomini, a bordo di un’Alfa 147 scura”). Manocchia included screenshots of early news reports that had reported that there were two suspects, and a photograph that showed a second man other than Traini. Italian media initially reported that a man had been stopped by the police while driving a car similar to Traini’s, but updated the reports after police said that that man was not a suspect.

Traini, who briefly ran for office under Manocchia’s Lega Nord party, was sentenced to 12 years in prison for the shootings in October 2018.

Asked about the Macerata article, Manocchia told NewsGuard, “I’m not defending this idiot, there are no doubts on this. I raised doubts. It takes more than this to be a conspiracy theorist, which I’m not” (“Lungi da me difendere quell’imbecille. Su questo non ci sono dubbi. Ho sollevato dubbi. Ci vorrebbe di più per essere un complottista. Io non lo sono”).

Because ImolaOggi.it’s news stories and headlines have repeatedly misstated facts and advanced theories without evidence, NewsGuard has determined that the website repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and publishes deceptive headlines.

The site does not state a political orientation, although its stories are predominantly critical of migration, Muslims, and Islam. ImolaOggi.it occasionally labels opinionated portions of news articles in bold red text. However, most news articles include unlabeled opinion.
For example, in the March 2019 article, “Banking Commission and Hard Brexit: chances of an ITALEXIT are increasing” (“Commissione Banche e Hard Brexit: ITALEXIT sempre più vicina”), the author argued that Italy’s exit from the European Union member states that use the euro is “necessary for the decay of the Single Global Government which is carried out by the elites” (“necessario per il disfacimento del Governo Unico Globale esercitato dalle elite”).

Because ImolaOggi.it articles mix opinion and news, and because the website does not clearly disclose its nationalist, right-leaning orientation to users, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Manocchia acknowledged to NewsGuard that the site does not label opinion in a separate section, but said, “Imagine the sort of critiques I’d have received, had I created an editorial by the editor in chief. I don’t want to appear as if I’m showing off pretending to be a journalist, a term I abhor. Obviously, we publish point of views and not only news.” (“Immagina le critiche che avrei ricevuto se avessi fatto un editoriale del direttore. Non voglio apparire come quello che si vanta di essere un giornalista, un termine che aborro. Comunque è ovvio. Pubblichiamo non solo notizie ma anche punti di vista”).

Imola Oggi does not generally publish corrections and does not post a corrections policy. Manocchia provided NewsGuard with an example of a correction published in June 2015. He provided three other examples of content that were not corrections. Manocchia said, “If I publish a story from a certain source, I trust it. But if that source had made a mistake, I wouldn’t know it.” (“Se pubblico una storia da una certa fonte, mi fido. Ma se quella fonte ha fatto un errore io non lo posso sapere”).

Transparency

The website does not disclose Manocchia’s ownership, although it lists him as its editor in chief (“direttore”) under the site’s logo and in the Imola Oggi page. Asked about the site’s lack of ownership disclosure, Manocchia told NewsGuard, “Why should I do it? I believe it’s wrong doing it. It’s something that’s usually not done. The public is not interested in knowing that Armando
Manocchia is the owner. (“Perché dovrei farlo? Credo sia sbagliato farlo. Non è qualcosa che in genere si fa. Il pubblico non è interessato a sapere che Armando Manocchia è il proprietario”).

A box that appears to the right of every article says that the site “does not receive financing and has no owner” (“non riceve finanziamenti e non ha padroni”). The site solicits donations in the box, with the message, “thanks to your contribution, you’ll help us in remaining independent” (“Grazie al tuo contributo, ci aiuterai a mantenere la nostra indipendenza”), Donations can be made to a prepaid card in Manocchia’s name.

Manocchia told NewsGuard that he thinks the site's overall donations have amounted to fewer than 3,000 euros. “I don’t get rich from donations as is believed,” (“Non mi arricchisco con le donazioni come si crede”), he said.

The site does not name any other content creators besides Manocchia. Articles rarely have bylines, and when they do, they do not provide author contact or biographical information. When asked by NewsGuard why many stories lack bylines, Manocchia said, “This is because they are often attributed to the newsroom. I’m not interested in putting my name everywhere” (“Questo perché sono della redazione. Non sono interessato a mettere il mio nome ovunque”).

Advertising is distinguished from editorial content.

History

The site originally owned and run by Radio Logica, a local radio station that no longer exists. The site, which launched in 1997, covered local news in the town of Imola.

Manocchia bought the site in 2011. He ran in the 2013 Italian general election to become a Chamber of Deputies member, under the “Io Amo l’Italia” movement. The conservative movement was founded by Magdi Cristiano Allam, a journalist and former member of the European Parliament, known for his controversial comments on Islam.

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