

Nobel Winners Come Out for Saviano

George De Stefano (October 22, 2008)



The Italian government must protect the "Gomorra" author, said six Nobel Prize winners this week

In my I-Italy op-ed, "Rushdie on Saviano: Camorra's fatwa worse than Khomeini's," I quoted Italian journalist Giuseppe D'Avanzo's claim that anti-camorra author Roberto Saviano was "a man alone."



But no more. Since the news broke that gangsters from Casal di Principe had marked him for death, there has been a heartening outpouring of support for the embattled author of Gomorra.

This week six Nobel Prize winners issued a joint statement deploring the threats against Saviano's life and demanding that the Italian government protect the journalist and crack down on those who threaten him.

"The [Italian] State must do all in its power to protect him and to defeat the camorra," the signatories declared. "But the case of Saviano is not only a police problem. It is a problem of democracy. The secure liberty of Saviano matters to all of us, as citizens...we call on the State to assume its responsibility, because it is intolerable that this can happen in Europe in 2008."

The appeal was signed by two Italian winners of the Nobel prize, playwright-actor Dario Fo and medical researcher Rita Levi Montalcini, as well as former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev, German author Gunter Grass, the South African Bishop Desmond Tutu, and Turkish author Orhan Pamuk.

La [Repubblica](#) [2] posted the statement at its website and invited its readers to sign it. As of today (Tuesday, October 21), there were more than 140,000 signatures, from Italy and abroad. The signatories include such well-known authors as Martin Amis, Jonathan Franzen, Ian McEwan, Jose Saramago and Chuck Palahniuk.

Other newspapers, including Spain's El País and France's Nouvel Observateur, have published the appeal since it appeared in Repubblica.

La Repubblica had closed the online petition but will re-open it. Check the homepage of the paper's website and add your name.

Sign for Roberto Saviano [3]

Roberto Saviano is under death threats for denouncing the criminal deeds of the Camorra in his book Gomorra, translated and read all over the world. His freedom is under threat as well as his autonomy as a writer, his chances to meet his family, to enjoy a social life, to have part in the public life, to travel in his own country.

A young writer, guilty to have investigated the organized crime revealing its methods and its structure is forced to live an hidden, underground life, while the Camorra bosses send him death threats from their jails ordering him to stop writing for La Repubblica, his newspaper, and to keep silent. The State must do every effort to protect Saviano and to defeat the Camorra. But this is not a mere police case. It's a problem of democracy. Saviano's safe freedom concerns everyone of us as citizens.

Signing this appeal we intend to take charge of it, as a personal commitment, urging the State at the same time to take on its responsibility, because it's intolerable that something like this could happen in Europe in 2008.

<http://www.repubblica.it/speciale/2008/appelli/saviano2/index.html> [3]



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