

**NO NAME KITCHEN
OCTOBER 2025**

STRIPPED OF CHILDHOOD: ABANDONMENT, HARASSMENT, AND DETENTION OF CHILDREN ON THE MOVE IN ITALY

**ALTERNATIVE REPORT FOR THE COMMITTEE
ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**



I. SUBMITTING ORGANISATION

No Name Kitchen (NNK) is an independent organisation that documents and monitors border violence by police and state officials. Founded in 2017, NNK works closely with affected communities to document and report human rights violations, including pushbacks, collective expulsions, systemic neglect, and administrative and judicial misconduct.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report presents written information to assist the Committee on the Rights of the Child during the examination of the State Party Report for Italy.

This report documents violations of the rights of migrant and refugee children in Italy, drawing on field evidence collected by NNK in Trieste and Ventimiglia. Through continuous observation and collection of first-hand testimonies, NNK's monitoring reveals clear breaches of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Children declaring themselves as minors are frequently turned away by Italian authorities, or denied access to care structures, even when in possession of documents. This neglect is compounded by harassment, verbal aggression, and attempts to intimidate both children and those that attempt to assist them.

Misidentification of age is widespread and appears to be rooted in discriminatory practices embedded and embraced in the daily work of authorities. This leads to unlawful readmissions, denial of family reunification, and exclusion from the protection systems which children are entitled to under the CRC.

NNK has also documented prolonged detention of children during cross-border returns between France and Italy, in which children are sometimes not provided access to translators, not informed of the reasons for their detention or their rights, and sometimes not in receipt of the necessary paperwork.

The cumulative effect of these practices is a normalisation of cruelty and of rights violations. Migrant children's rights are sidelined, and by refusing to treat them as children the very right to have rights is undermined and denied.

III. NEGLIGENCE AND ABANDONMENT OF MINORS (ARTICLE 2, 3, AND 39)

The neglect and abandonment of migrant and refugee children which NNK has observed during monitoring efforts in Ventimiglia and Trieste exposes widespread violations of Article 2, 3, and 39 of the CRC.

NNK has observed that many of the children who apply for asylum in Trieste, Italy, have already spent several years in European states, in particular France or Spain. NNK encounters many unaccompanied minors on the verge of turning 18 who have spent several years on the move within Schengen territory, some of whom have been **registered as adults in other states several years prior**. Nonetheless, the Questura is obliged to immediately take charge of anyone who declares themselves to be a minor.

NNK's observations in Trieste over the last 6 months reveal that the state systematically fails to take many self-declared minors into care. Many were turned away from the Questura through deterrence practices that seem to seek to discourage young people, especially those who have already experienced rejections of protection or neglect from other European states.

Similarly, in Ventimiglia, a lack of adequate accommodation for children forces them to either sleep on the streets or in centres for adults¹. Children are exposed to abuse in inadequate shelter facilities that do not protect them, which civil society actors have criticised for almost a decade without noticeable improvement². Children are then forced to depend on civil society actors, whose capacities are both limited and under pressure and interference from the state. This violates the right of children deprived of their family environment to be protected and cared for by the state, in accordance with Article 20.

NNK observed the following practices of negligence:

1. On several occasions, patrol cars failed to intervene despite reports of a lone foreign minor in a state of abandonment (even when the call came from Save the Children).
2. Failure to take charge of children even in the presence of documents (photos or originals).
3. Officers often speak in Italian in front of the children, who appear confused and frightened because they cannot understand the reason for such aggression.
4. Failure to refer unaccompanied children sleeping on the streets to shelters or social care structures, even when requested.

The above practices breach Article 2 of the CRC, which provides that the rights of the convention apply to all children within the jurisdiction of the state, without discrimination; Article 3, which provides that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration; Article 12 that provides that children have the right to an opportunity to be heard in judicial and administrative proceedings; and Article 22 which ensures refugee children receive appropriate protection.

¹ This was the subject of complaints to the prefecture by civil society actors in Decemer 2024, available [here](#).

² See, for example, Oxfam's report in 2018, available [here](#).

Such abandonment is particularly cruel when considered in light of the grave and dehumanising violence that many of these children have experienced along the Balkan and Mediterranean routes. Of 812 incidents of border violence reported by NNK between 2017 and 2025, 30% of incidents involved children - including 233 pushbacks of children. Although the vast majority of these pushbacks took place elsewhere on the Balkan route (in particular, Croatia, Serbia, and Bulgaria), the psychological impacts of these incidents exacerbate the cruelty of abandoning children once they have arrived in Italy. Children who have been forced to travel these irregular migration routes by displacement and a lack of safe and legal routes are at high risk for various mental health conditions, including PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and problems with social integration³. These children are therefore in particular need of the protections which the CRC mandates.

Such abandonment therefore also violates Article 39 of the CRC, which mandates that states take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery of child victims of any form of neglect, exploitation, abuse, or armed conflicts. Rather than providing a reintegration environment to foster healing, the Italian government continues to neglect children in such circumstances.

IV. HARASSMENT OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN

(ARTICLE 16 AND 39)

In addition to neglect and abandonment, migrant children in Italy are subjected to systematic harassment and racial profiling by law enforcement, violating Articles 16 and 39 of the CRC.

The cruelty of abandonment is compounded by the systematic harassment of children, reinforcing a consistent message of exclusion. NNK's reporting in Trieste and Ventimiglia demonstrates that people on the move in Italy are targeted by harassment and racial profiling, and children are no exception from these patterns.

Observed practices include:

1. Verbal aggression, mocking, and racist remarks during interactions.
2. Threats directed at children and at civil society actors assisting them: such as the threat made to NNK that "*there are investigations underway*".
3. Arbitrary stop and search practices that single individuals out based on racial profiling.

³ See, for example, research available [here](#).

These practices violate Article 16 of the CRC which protects children from arbitrary interference, and the right to the protection of the law against such attacks.

This harassment is not incidental, but seems institutionalised, as evidenced by threatening remarks made to human rights defenders who attempt to highlight concerns to the Questura.

Just as neglect from the state leaves children exposed to further violence, these forms of harassment seem to seek to actively retraumatise and exacerbate suffering, at the hands of the very institutions that are mandated to safeguard their rights and childhood.

In combination, these practices create an environment where children are not only unprotected, but treated with a lack of dignity and respect to an extent which seriously jeopardises their ability to recover and reintegrate - as required under Article 39.

V. MISIDENTIFICATION OF AGE (ARTICLE 2, 3, 12, AND 22)

The **persistent misidentification of age** is one of the most serious and systematic violations monitored. This practice is rooted in **discriminatory presumptions** rather than the best interests of the child and reflecting a **deliberate disregard for children's rights and protections as guaranteed under the CRC**.

NNK observed the following misidentification practices:

1. Discriminatory and violent use of language to justify the refusal to take charge: *"We decide the age. When it turns out they are adults—because these ones are clearly 32 years old..."*
2. Constant unavailability of interpreters and cultural mediators (observed at various times of day and night).
3. Subjective use of materials to establish minority status and decide whether to take charge: at times a photo is deemed sufficient, at other times not; sometimes paper documents are rejected; in some cases, documents in Pashto are refused.
4. Continuous questioning of the words and reports of volunteers and researchers, accompanied by veiled threats regarding "ongoing investigations."
5. Attempts to blame volunteers, suggesting that once inside the Questura, they would claim that *"we push them to declare themselves minors."*
6. Referencing a directive from the 'procura dei minori' that suggests that in cases of reasonable doubt the person should be considered an adult - despite national

legislative decrees requiring that in cases of doubt the person should be treated as a minor⁴.

Our concerns regarding these practices are **confirmed by the blatant discriminatory and hostile attitude expressed by police inspectors of the Questura**.. During one recording, an inspector stated:

“We decide whether they look like minors or adults. Based on what we decide, we might then do an X-ray to confirm or not confirm our opinion. Now, if it’s clearly a boy, that’s one thing. But for people who are clearly adults, who have nothing of a minor about them, we decide they’re not minors. [...] Then when we see that they’ve already been registered in Belgium, where they do the X-ray immediately, as 32-year-old adults... and besides, why is it that you bring them here and then we’re the ones who have to take them on? [...] We’re not here begging—“please, but in our opinion they’re minors” [mocking us]. [...] You, please, you instruct them to declare themselves minors if they’re adults. It’s more convenient. And just so you know, there are investigations underway.”

The interview provides an example of age assessment procedures rooted in racist and anti-immigrant sentiments rather than the best interests of the child (violations of Article 2, 22, and 3 CRC), as well as a blatant disregard for the Questura’s obligations to take charge irrespective of another state’s decision (violating Article 12, 22, 2, and 3 CRC), as well as the further discrimination children experience from receiving support from NGOs or civil society actors (violating Article 2 and 22 CRC).

At the French-Italian border in Ventimiglia, this systematic misregistration of age leads to unlawful readmissions and abandonment of children who should be under the state’s care. For example, in May 2025 the NNK team witnessed the ‘readmission’ of an unaccompanied child from Guinea, who had been trying to reach his parents in France but was readmitted to Italy. Upon asking both him and the police of the reasons for the readmission, the police informed us he had been registered as an adult in Lampedusa - a misregistration that prevented family reunification, violating Article 3, 9, 10, 12, 20, and 22 of the CRC. Similarly, in May 2025, NNK supported an Algerian child who had been registered as an adult by the Questura. Despite having proof of his age, this was not rectified and he was readmitted to Italy nonetheless, again violating Articles 3, 12, 20, and 22.

These practices are compounded by the Italian border police’s systematic acceptance of French readmissions without carrying out any independent verification of age. From consistent monitoring of the border, NNK has collected evidence from October 2024 to August 2025 that demonstrates that Italian police routinely release children after only rudimentary processing or even deliberate misprocessing of age by the French police. In October 2024, NNK supported a Sudanese unaccompanied child who had just been

⁴ Art. 19-bis, comma 8, d.lgs. 142/2015. More information available [here](#).

released after readmission, who informed NNK reporters that inside the French PAF post another child had been forced to sign a document stating he was not a minor, leading to his readmission to Italy. Despite this injustice, his age was uncritically accepted by the Italian police who processed his readmission. In December 2024, NNK supported an Algerian unaccompanied child who had received a readmission form with certain details pre-filled⁵ in which the age was incorrect. Nevertheless, he was processed as an adult by the Italian police. Similarly, in June 2025 NNK met a 17-year-old child that both French and Italian police had refused to process as a child, informing him that they did not believe him because he had a beard.

Although the readmission by French authorities themselves constitute a violation of the CRC, the passive acceptance of readmissions, and blind reliance on evidently corrupted age-determination procedures by the French police, renders the Italian authorities in breach of Articles 3, 12, 20, and 22.

VI. DETENTION, ARREST, AND IMPRISONMENT OF CHILDREN

(ARTICLE 37)

Detention of children, particularly in the context of readmissions, is carried out in Italy in a manner which is neither exceptional nor a measure of last resort, violating Article 37 of the CRC.

NNK observed the following practices:

1. Extended periods of administrative detention during returns from France to Italy, in custody of both French and Italian police, exceeding legal limits.
2. Consistent failure to provide legal paperwork, including withholding information on the purpose of detention, duration, and rights in custody.
3. Lack of cultural mediators and translators, leaving children unable to understand or exercise their rights.

For example, in January 2025 NNK supported a child from Guinea-Bissau, who had been readmitted from France to Italy. He informed NNK reporters that there was no translator or social worker present, and he was not given any paperwork by either the French or Italian police. In February 2025, NNK was informed that two children were being held in detention in Ventimiglia. NNK reporters waited over 4 hours for the release of these children, but they were not released, meaning the children were detained far over the legal limit.

⁵ Examples of such forms can be seen in our recent submission to the UN Human Rights Committee, available [here](#).

Deprivations of liberty in this manner violate Article 37(b-d), 3, and 20, given the state's failure to ensure detention is only used as a measure of last resort, and failure to ensure the child's best interests. Furthermore, the failure to provide paperwork and translators leaves children unable to receive due process, violating Article 12 and 40. In a recent ruling, the ECtHR confirmed that **"The detention of children for immigration related purposes is never justified and proportionate, and will always be violation of the rights enshrined in the CRC."**⁶ Whilst international committees, courts, and tribunals consistently rule against any immigration detention of minors, the Italian state continues to use detention as a regular process of readmission.

VII. CONCLUSION

The cumulative evidence provided by this report reveals a troubling pattern of normalisation of violence, exclusion, and trauma in migrant children - in violation of core CRC protections.

The evidence provided in this report, corroborated by sustained civil society monitoring over the last few years, reveals violations of the principle of non-discrimination (Article 2), the best interests of the child (Article 3), the right of the child to be heard in matters affecting them (Article 12), the right to appropriate protection (Article 22), the right to freedom from unlawful interference and harassment (Article 16), the right to protection when deprived of their family environment (Article 20), the right to freedom from arbitrary detention (Article 37) and the right to an environment of recovery (Article 39).

Although the refusal to acknowledge minority often precedes these violations (denying children of their childhood and their very right to have rights), Italian authorities enact systematic detention, racial profiling, neglect, and harassment of children - irrespective of whether they have been registered as a child or not. These practices reinforce one another, constructing an environment where neglect and abuse of migrant children is normalised and permitted.

The Committee is urged to address these violations with urgency, and to hold the State Party accountable for ensuring full compliance with the Convention.

⁶ A.B.A. and Others v. The Netherlands (2025), §30. Available <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/A.B.A.-and-others-v.-The-Netherlands.pdf>