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Berlusconi Conviction & Jail Upheld, He Issues Video Rant

It may be sacrilege to compare former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi with fashion duo Dolce & Gabbana. But they are Italian and they are all convicted of tax crimes. They also know how to hit back.

D&G closed stores in protest at what they called an outrageous conviction they didn't deserve. See [Dolce & Gabbana Close Over Conviction—Temporary Or Final?](#) They weren't going to take their convictions sitting down, on the runway or anywhere else. Mr. Berlusconi's reaction was similar. He must have figured his tax conviction or jail time would be reversed by Italy's highest court.

When it wasn't, he fired off a 9 minute video rant. It may not rival Charlie Sheen, but there's still some drama. Mr. Berlusconi claims he is an innocent victim of "an incredible series of accusations and trials that had nothing to do with reality."

The emotional video includes Mr. Berlusconi denouncing the decision as "based on nothing, and which deprives me of my freedom and political rights. No-one can understand the veritable violence which has been reserved for me



Silvio Berlusconi (Image credit: AFP/Getty Images via @daylife)

through a series of charges and trials that had no basis in reality,” he said. See [Italy ex-PM Berlusconi in angry tirade at jail ruling](#).

The former prime minister was sentenced to four years in prison at the conclusion of the trial in October last year. It was automatically reduced to one year. Besides, given his age, he should never see a cell. Still, some of the imagery being invoked is, well, rather grand in scope.

Anti-establishment politician Beppe Grillo lauded the decision. He claimed Berlusconi had “polluted, corrupted and paralyzed Italian politics for 21 years.” He even compared Berlusconi’s sentence to the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is hard to imagine Ronald Reagan asking Mr. Berlusconi to tear down anything.

Berlin Wall or not, it’s true that Mr. Berlusconi has faced dozens of court cases. His video says it was “genuine judicial harassment that is unmatched in the civilized world.” Perhaps, but Italy without Berlusconi’s legal battles would be a bit like pizza without cheese.

The former prime minister and senator has faced a string of trials after leaving office in November 2011. Appeals are pending after he was convicted of having paid for sex with an under-age prostitute. Ditto for arranging the leak and publication in a newspaper of a police wiretap. Yet this final appeal is now over.

Friend and foe alike have never seen Mr. Berlusconi really and truly and finally convicted. Still, a silver lining for him is that the appeals court would not bar him from public office. That issue is remanded to the lower court. It means Berlusconi can remain a senator and the leader of his centre-right People of Freedom Party for now.

Berlusconi’s lawyers claim he should have been acquitted, and that they would “evaluate and pursue any useful initiative, also in Europe, to make sure that this unjust sentence is radically reformed.” See [Italy ex-PM Berlusconi in angry tirade at jail ruling](#).

You can reach me at Wood@WoodLLP.com. This discussion is not intended as legal advice, and cannot be relied upon for any purpose without the services of a qualified professional.