

**Italian politics****Giorgia Meloni accuses Donald Trump of pandering to west's enemies**

Italian premier on offensive after US president claimed she 'begged' for a photo with him



Donald Trump and Giorgia Meloni speak at the G7 summit in France on Wednesday © Palazzo Chigi press office/AFP/Getty Images

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Giorgia Meloni has accused Donald Trump of being too “accommodating” to the enemies of the west after he claimed the Italian prime minister had “begged” for photos with him, as the animosity between the two former allies deepens.

In a social media video published on Friday, Meloni — once one of Trump’s strongest allies in Europe — rejected the US president’s account of their encounter at the recent G7 summit, saying she was “frankly astonished” at a narrative she said was “completely fabricated”.

“I don’t know why the US president behaves this way towards his own allies,” she said. “It’s not the first time it’s happened. It is unfortunate that he does not have the same determination with the enemies of the west and with the enemies of the United States, with whose leaders he appears much more accommodating.”

“But there’s one thing he must remember: neither I nor Italy ever beg,” Meloni concluded.

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Giorgia Meloni posts a response to the US president's claim she 'begged' for a photo with him © Reuters

Trump hit back on Saturday in a Truth Social post, saying that Meloni “wouldn’t even let us use Italy’s landing strips or runways, a great logistical inconvenience”.

“Now, after the United States defeated Iran militarily, she wants to be friends again in order to get her ‘numbers up.’ No thanks!!!” he wrote.

In response, Meloni posted a statement on Instagram on Saturday saying that “these constant, unprovoked attacks are senseless”.

“As for my popularity, being your friend certainly has not helped it,” she added.

Italian lawmakers from across the political spectrum have turned on Trump, laying bare the breakdown in relations — and the depth of ill feeling — between the once-stalwart allies.

Antonio Tajani, the foreign minister, announced that he was cancelling a scheduled visit to the US next week in protest at the presidential slight.

“The serious and offensive words of President Trump towards Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni offend all of Italy,” Tajani wrote on X.

Defence minister Guido Crosetto, who was in Washington earlier this week, lamented that Trump’s comments would do “no good to anyone: neither to the US nor to Italy”. Deputy premier Matteo Salvini said that “whoever attacks Giorgia Meloni attacks all of us”.

The leftwing opposition also criticised Trump.

Giuseppe Conte, leader of the populist Five Star Movement, said: “Italy does not deserve to be humiliated so blatantly.” But he also took a swipe at Meloni, suggesting that she was paying the price for getting too close to Trump and his Maga movement.

The drama erupted on Friday morning after a journalist for the Italian television station La7 had a brief phone interview with Trump about his encounter with Meloni during the G7 summit in France. Trump claimed that Meloni “wanted to have a picture with me so badly” and that he “felt sorry for her”.

Meloni has been one of Trump's staunchest political defenders in Europe, even trying to justify his threat to invade Greenland, and even the US-Israeli bombing of Iran.

But relations deteriorated sharply last month after Meloni intervened in a spat between Trump and Pope Leo over the war in Iran, calling the verbal attacks of the US president on the Catholic spiritual leader "unacceptable".

After that, Trump tore into Meloni, complaining that her government had failed to back US efforts to destroy Iran's nuclear programme and that she herself "lacked courage".

Despite this, Meloni sought to repair the damage to reaffirm their relations, seeking out Trump during the G7 meeting. Afterwards, she claimed relations were back on an even keel.

"There were no recriminations," Meloni told journalists at the G7, adding that she and Trump both have "fairly strong personalities" but also both "resolutely defend our national interests".

"There's no need for us to sort things out when we disagree on something — after all, each of us obviously understands the other's point of view — so we jumped right back into discussing what needs to be done in the coming months," she said.

Meloni, who since Trump's return to the White House has sought to act as a bridge between Europe and the US administration, has come under increased pressure in recent weeks as far-right firebrand Roberto Vannacci's fledgling party builds support ahead of next year's elections, accusing her of betraying far-right ideals and forcing her to prove she has not gone soft in office.

Vannacci on Friday defended Meloni: "I do not agree with those who, in order to attack Giorgia Meloni or her government, end up dragging the Italian prime minister through the mud — and, along with her, the image of our nation."

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