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Italy: Woman human rights defender Pia Perricci faces SLAPP case by Marche Multiservizi S.p.A.

On 26 March 2026, woman human rights defender and lawyer **Pia Perricci** will attend the first hearing in the defamation lawsuit filed against her by the water utility company Marche Multiservizi S.p.A. (MMS) at the Court of Pesaro. MMS accuses Pia Perricci of damaging its image and reputation through her public criticism of the company's retroactive water tariff increases, and through her warnings about water losses and asbestos in water pipes. MMS is seeking €150.000 in damages.

[Pia Perricci](#) is a woman human rights defender and a civil and criminal lawyer based in Pesaro, Italy. She is the president of EvolviAmo Pesaro Association, an organisation working on citizen participation and transparency of public funds. Since 2020, she has been engaged in defending citizens' rights and promoting transparency and accountability. Her work includes legal actions aimed at increasing transparency in public funds and administration, as well as environmental violations and other issues of public interest. She regularly takes on pro bono cases, for example the cases of human rights defenders [Roberto Malini](#) and [Lisetta Sperindei](#).

The defamation lawsuit by MMS bears the characteristics of a typical Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP). MMS initiated the lawsuit after Pia Perricci raised concerns in the media about the risks posed by asbestos in water pipes and the increase in water tariffs. The woman human rights defender argued that the company should utilise its resources to reduce the water losses due to the infrastructure instead of charging citizens with, according to her, unlawful retroactive tariffs.

Pia Perricci filed appeals on behalf of affected citizens who demanded the retraction of the retroactive increases reflected on their bills. A [court ruling on 16 March 2026](#) found that the retroactive application of increased tariffs was unlawful and ordered that Pia Perricci's clients must be refunded.

On 13 January 2025, MSS sent a formal notice to the woman human rights defender, informing her that she had ten days to retract statements she allegedly made on 4 January 2025 during a radio interview and declare them false, otherwise they would initiate a lawsuit. In response, Pia Perricci held a press conference on 22 January 2025 addressing the allegations against MMS and reiterating her concerns regarding retroactive tariff adjustments, the state of the water infrastructure, and the health risks related to asbestos.

On 9 April 2025, the Mediation and Conciliation Body of the Court of Pesaro held a mediation meeting between MMS and the woman human rights defender. The mediation process is a mandatory preliminary step in disputes before legal proceedings commence, aimed at reaching a settlement agreement. The parties were unable to reach an agreement and the legal proceedings continued, resulting in the civil defamation suit against Pia Perricci.

On 27 June 2025, MMS filed a defamation lawsuit, stating that Pia Perricci has initiated “a full-blown media campaign”, that she was “distorting the facts” which would “likely to cause unjustified social alarm.” The company claimed that by publicly criticising and questioning the legitimacy and lawfulness of retroactive tariff adjustment mechanisms, she damaged the reputation and corporate image of the company. MMS demanded €150.000 in compensation for the alleged damages.

The alleged defamation acts cited in the court summons include several public statements made in early January 2025, including Facebook and Instagram posts criticising the increase in water and purification tariffs and calling for a [public demonstration](#) on water management. The summons also refer to several [articles published in local newspapers](#) and Pia Perricci’s alleged remarks during the radio interview on 4 January 2025. In the interview, she stressed that MMS must invest and improve the water network to eliminate asbestos and decrease water losses.

MMS claims the lawsuit cannot legally be considered a SLAPP case because Italy has not yet transposed the EU anti-SLAPP directive and the directive therefore only applies to cases with cross-border implications. However, the absence of national legislation does not prevent institutions or civil society actors from identifying lawsuits as SLAPP cases and courts to recognise them as such. This SLAPP case, with a compensation request of minimum €150.000, is an attempt to silence the woman human rights defender and prevent her from defending public interest.

Front Line Defenders believes that woman human rights defender Pia Perricci is being targeted for her peaceful work as a human rights defender and for protecting public interests. The lawsuit against her is based on public statements made in the context of a public debate concerning citizens’ access to essential services and issues of public health, and were thus legitimate civic engagement aimed at informing citizens and advocating for transparency and affordability of water services as a public good.

Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Italy to:

1. Dismiss the legal proceedings against woman human rights defender Pia Perricci as the defamation lawsuit bears the characteristics of a SLAPP case and targets her due to her legitimate and peaceful human rights work;
2. Promptly transpose the EU anti-SLAPPs directive into the national legislation and ensure that the judiciary upholds the right to freedom of expression and public interests in defamation lawsuits.

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders and organisations in Italy are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with Italy's national and international human rights obligations and commitments.

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