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## **ITALY'S 5 STAR MOVEMENT REJECT 'FINAL OFFER' BY FAR-RIGHT LEADER FOR ANTI-EU GOVERNMENT**

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Deutsche Welle (3 May 2018)

Far-right leader Matteo Salvini had made a "last offer" for a coalition government that would resist EU policies. But the eurosceptic Five Star Movement have refused to budge, saying they want fresh elections instead.

Five Star Movement (M5S) leader Luigi Di Maio on Thursday rejected a "final offer" for an anti-establishment coalition government from the leader of the far-right Northern League, Matteo Salvini.

"It is not possible to form any government of change with [former Prime Minister Silvio] Berlusconi and the right-of-center bloc," said Di Maio. "Salvini, who continues to re-propose this solution, is making fun of Italians."

The 32-year-old left-of-center leader instead proposed fresh elections, saying: "The only solution is to return to the ballot box."

### **No government in sight**

Since inconclusive elections in March, Italy has been embroiled in a political crisis, with the country's political parties unable to reach a compromise to form a government.

Although Di Maio's left-wing eurosceptic M5S led the election with 32 percent of the vote, Salvini's Northern League heads a right-of-center coalition that managed to secure a combined 37 percent. But both political forces failed to reach the 40 percent necessary to govern.

M5S campaigned on an anti-corruption and eurosceptic platform. They have refused to enter negotiations on a coalition government that would include Berlusconi's center-right Forza Italia, saying he represents everything they are against.

[Silvio Berlusconi in 1992]

Silvio Berlusconi: Italy's power politician is back  
Media mogul

Born in Milan in 1936, Berlusconi started out his career as a singer on cruise ships in the 1950s before rising to become a major player in Italy's media landscape. He created the first (and only)

Italian TV commercial empire, and created media groups with huge portfolios like Fininvest. He also owned the highly successful soccer team AC Milan from 1986 to 2016.

'Everything possible'

Salvini said on Wednesday that he was "humbly available" to discuss an agenda that would include reforms to pensions, education, the judiciary and tax system.

The far-right leader has argued that his Northern League and M5S could come together to resist EU policies as an anti-establishment government that he would lead. But Salvini has said that such a government would also include his allies, including Forza Italia.

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"I will do everything possible until the last minute to give Italians a government that will last five years and deal with this country's emergency," said Salvini, who campaigned on a platform that threatened to deport hundreds of thousands of migrants.

[Matteo Salvini]

Matteo Salvini has urged the M5S to take his offer and form a government that he would lead as prime minister

Elections 'most plausible outcome'

Italian President Sergio Mattarella has resisted calls for an early election. Daily newspaper Il Corriere della Sera reported that Mattarella wants a budget approved before calling new elections, and that requires a government.

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Analysts believe that Mattarella will likely push for a stop-gap government that would have a limited mandate until December. In the event that no political leader emerges to form a government, Mattarella may handpick one to form a consensus government for a limited mandate.

But the likely outcome is fresh elections, which could take place before December, according to analysts. "As things stand, we see new elections as the most plausible outcome," political analyst Federico Santi of the New York-based Eurasia Group told the Associated Press.

[Silvio Berlusconi feeds a lamb]

Democracy Italian style: The weirdest moments of Italy's election campaign

He's back, and this time he's a vegetarian

Last Easter, in an attempt to soften his image as he eyed a return to politics, Berlusconi took part in an ad promoting vegetarianism that featured him snuggling lambs in soft lighting overlaid with easy listening music. Although Berlusconi is barred from seeking office for another year due to a fraud conviction, a bloc led by his Forza Italia party has been polling strongly.

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