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Italians reacted with outrage on Tuesday after a European court ruled that displaying crucifixes in the country's schools violated the principle of secular education.

Italy's education minister condemned the judgment by the European Court of Human Rights, saying that the Christian cross was a symbol of the country's Roman Catholic religion and cultural identity.

Mariastella Gelmini, a member of the conservative government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, argued that "no one, and certainly not an ideological European court, will succeed in erasing our identity," said

Other ministers said they were appalled by the ruling, calling it "absurd," "shameful" and "offensive."

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