Alghero honors the Lions of the Folgore: monument to the fallen of El Alamein inaugurated

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ALGHERO, June 21, 2025 - This morning, at the **Lepanto-Cecchini gardens in Alghero**, the monument dedicated to the Paratroopers fallen in the battle of El Alamein was officially inaugurated. The work, created by sculptor Mario Nieddu at the initiative and design of Pino Meloni, president of the provincial section A.N.P.D'I. of Sassari, represents a tribute to the Lions of the Folgore, protagonists of one of the most epic pages in Italian military history.

The ceremony, attended by numerous civil and military authorities, represented the culmination of a long human and symbolic journey. The project took shape thanks to Meloni's desire to remember what the Italian Paratroopers did in the Egyptian desert in 1942.

The marble plaque at the foot of the statue commemorating the sacrifice and heroism of the Italian Paratroopers at El Alamein

> "*The idea – Meloni told BRIGATAFOLGORE.NET – was born from the need to bring to light an episode too often overshadowed. The Lions of the Folgore at El Alamein fought with such courage that they even earned the honor of arms from the enemy. They were not harp players or spaghetti eaters, but soldiers and heroes.*"

The work depicts a paratrooper with a grenade in hand, symbolizing resistance and fighting spirit, and at his feet the body of a fallen comrade. The details of the statue faithfully reproduce the Saharan uniforms of the time, the colors, and expressions, thanks to the close collaboration between artist Nieddu and Meloni:

> "*Everything you see – Meloni explained – comes from my vision, which Mario was able to interpret perfectly.*"

From left: the Mayor of Alghero Raimondo Cacciotto, sculptor Mario Nieddu, and the monument's creator Pino Meloni

The ceremony was also attended by **General of the Army Corps (ret.) Paratrooper Incursor Marco Bertolini**, national president of A.N.P.d'I., who wanted to reaffirm the value of the military oath and the deep sense of belonging that does not end with discharge.

Bertolini expressed his appreciation to the A.N.P.d'I. section led by Pino Meloni, congratulating them for the exceptional commitment shown in preserving and transmitting historical memory with the creation of this monument. He also emphasized the importance of events like this, from which to draw inspiration to find motivation and proudly reaffirm: *"I am still here."*

> *"We swore once, and that oath does not expire - declared the General - The oath remains for life, even when a soldier returns to civilian life."*

Among those present was also the **Honorable Paola Chiesa**, who recalled the fallen and the value of historical memory:

> "*We are here to remember, not to forget the fallen of El Alamein, who today watch us from above, from that corner of Heaven reserved for Saints, Martyrs, and Heroes. We do it without rancor, and without that nostalgia for its own sake, but to fulfill a civic duty.*"

The Honorable Chiesa finally reiterated the respect and admiration that the Italian Armed Forces receive internationally.

Among the political authorities present, the **Mayor of Alghero Raimondo Cacciotto** highlighted the indissoluble bond that unites Alghero to the history of Italy.

The Honorable Paola Chiesa, in the center, emphasized the importance of keeping the memory of the Lions of the Folgore alive, recalling how the Italian Armed Forces are today respected and admired internationally.

A moment of great emotional intensity was the intervention of **Luisella Caria**, sister of **Sergeant Major Sabotatore Paratrooper Giannino Caria**, Gold Medal for Military Valor in memory, who fell in 1971 during the operation to recover the remains of the fallen at Meloria.

In her heartfelt remembrance, Luisella Caria recalled the values that inspired so many young people ready to sacrifice their lives for greater ideals, emphasizing the importance of courage and the spirit that distinguishes military parachuting.

Also present was **Colonel Paratrooper Gianluca Simonelli**, an officer with a long career in the Folgore and now commander of the 152nd Regiment Sassari, decorated with a Silver Medal for Army Valor for courage demonstrated in Afghanistan, where — during a violent firefight in Bala Baluk on July 25, 2009 — he heroically led his Paratrooper Company to cover the retreat of another unit under enemy attack.

From left: The provincial president A.N.P.d'I. of Sassari Pino Meloni, the national president Gen. C.A. Marco Bertolini, and Colonel Gianluca Simonelli, Commander of the 152nd Regiment Sassari

However, the history of the monument is marked by a sad episode: in September 2024, even before the official inauguration, the work was subjected to a serious act of vandalism. Vandals attempted to damage it, trying to detach a finger from the statue. The act was described by Meloni as an "affront to memory," while the Honorable Mauro Rotelli called it "a despicable act against a heroic page of our history." The statue was subsequently restored, with determination and without yielding to provocation.

Capturing images, videos, and testimonies of the inauguration for BRIGATAFOLGORE.NET was today the retired Paratrooper Raffaele Sestilli, who documented the day's events with passion and respect, contributing to fixing the value of this moment in time.

The monument to the Paratroopers of El Alamein in Alghero is not just an artistic work: it is a tangible sign of gratitude, a bridge between past and present, between those who fought for the Fatherland and those who today have the duty to remember. In an Italy that often risks forgetting too quickly, this statue reminds us that history cannot be erased – and that the Lions of the Folgore still live on, in the memory of those who have never stopped honoring them.

The ceremony was attended by paratroopers of yesterday and today, testifying to that deep and indissoluble bond that unites all Italian Paratroopers, of every era and generation.

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