

# Italy's biggest steel plant may have to halt production

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A view of the ILVA plant in the southern Italian city of Taranto on August 2. Italy's biggest steel plant may have to halt production after a new court ruling announced Saturday against the operators who must clean up pollution that some blame for high local cancer rates.

Italy's biggest steel plant may have to halt production after a new court ruling announced Saturday against the operators who must clean up pollution that some blame for high local cancer rates.

Judge Patrizia Todisco late Friday notified the ILVA plant's management that she "cannot foresee using the site... for production purposes" during the period of cleaning up the chemicals spewed out by the factory, which have been blamed for an environmental and public health crisis.

The clean-up order was issued by a court Tuesday, but it had not called for the closure of the plant located in the poor southern city of Taranto.

One of Europe's biggest steel [plants](#), the facility has seen a fierce stand-off between those who want it closed and thousands of families that depend on it for jobs at a time of a worsening economic crisis.

Tuesday's ruling partly reversed a decision by [prosecutors](#) in July to shut down the most polluting part of the plant. The chairman of ILVA said the factory could be kept running while the necessary upgrades are made, thereby safeguarding some 11,500 jobs.

The court also released five of the eight ILVA executives put under house arrest following a health scare investigation.

Experts had said chemicals spilling from the plant are behind high [cancer rates](#) and cardiovascular and [respiratory diseases](#) among workers and local residents, but the threat to close the plant had sparked protests and angered labour unions.

ILVA chairman Bruno Ferrante, who has been named as the state administrator, will oversee the 336-million-euro (\$414 million) clean-up plan funded by the government.

On Saturday Ferrante said he would appeal judge Todisco's decision.

ILVA, which is owned by the Riva Group, produced nearly 30 percent

of Italy's steel output in 2011.

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