



ITALY

SO MUCH MAFIA SO LITTLE NEWS

Report on the December 2018
joint Fact-Finding Mission

ITALY: SO MUCH MAFIA – SO LITTLE NEWS

Report on the December 2018 joint fact-finding mission

Content

So much Mafia so little news	3
The situation in Italy	4
Police escorts and other protective systems	18
Proposals	20
APPENDIX	
History of the Mafia	24
How the Italian protection system works	27
List of interviewees	30

Members of the Delegation:

Ossigeno per l'Informazione,
Rome (Italy): Giuseppe F. Mennella, Raffaella Della Morte and Ilaria Fevola

European Centre for Press- and Media Freedom (ECPMF), Leipzig (Germany): Stephanie Koch

Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropea (OBC Transeuropa), Trento (Italy): Valentina Vivona

Layout:

Andreas Lamm – ECPMF

Alberto Spampinato compiled this report with the collaboration of Giuseppe F. Mennella, Dario Barà and Raffaella Della Morte and published in Italian and English.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Front page-picture: pixaby / compositing-ECPMF

So much Mafia so little news

On the 5th and 6th of December 2018, a Fact Finding Mission of the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) was held in Rome with the aim of updating the Centre on the most serious problems of Italian newspapers and journalists who are committed to providing complete and truthful reporting on the Mafia and corruption and to offer an overview of the proposals for addressing and solving these problems. The Mission was also tasked with describing and assessing the Italian system of protection for journalists who are threatened by organised crime. This report summarises the findings that were collected through twenty structured interviews.

Journalists, magistrates, lawyers, parliamentarians, government officials, selected experts and witnesses were interviewed. They were selected on the basis of competence, availability and in order to form a gender-balanced representative sample. The full transcribed interviews are attached. The report cites some essential extracts.

The Fact-Finding Mission was organised by Ossigeno per l'Informazione led by Alberto Spampinato and was conducted with the support of the European Commission.

A longer version of this report with more details is available in Italian on the [Ossigeno.info](https://www.ossigeno.info) website.

THE SITUATION IN ITALY

THE ITALIAN DUALITY

Many people regard Italy as the birthplace of the "Mafia"; the country where it took root and expanded abroad. However, Italy is not only the country of the Mafia. It is also the country that above all others has sought remedies and developed effective methods to fight the Mafia.

This duality also applies to Italian journalism covering the Mafia. In fact, journalists and the Italian media are those who have suffered and continue to suffer from the maximum intimidation and pressure by the Mafias.

Nonetheless, at the same time journalists are the ones who have accumulated the most experience on the best way to monitor threats and other attacks on journalists and on the most effective ways of opposing that pressure. Journalists even accept the high risks that this entails, which are due in large part to threats and other violent reprisals, and also to heavy financial problems and, to a considerable extent, the vexatious libel proceedings, the weak legal status of journalists and other shortcomings in legislation.

A DAILY BATTLE

The traumatic working conditions of Italian reporters who deal with crime syndicates and corruption have been described in a few words by the senator Pietro Grasso, a former Head of the National Antimafia Directorate: "It is sad to admit that in Italy there are regions in which the journalist who describes the unvarnished reality of power risks his life. I say: describing 'power', not just the Mafia. (...) There are regions in which a daily battle is fought between the passion, the duty to inform and the pressure to be silent that expresses itself with violence, intimidation, death threats that materialise in bullets received by post or

bullets that break window panes or hit the front doors of their houses, or threatening letters, or car tyres ripped or cars burned."

The Mafia killed eight journalists who wrote hitherto unpublished information on the Mafia organisations in Sicily, another one in Campania - from 1960 to 1993. Currently, 21 journalists live with a police escort, defended by armed police, due to credible death threats. The police protect a further 167 with less comprehensive "protection and vigilance" measures.

However there is a multitude of reporters without protection who have been intimidated, threatened and subjected to retaliation and unjustifiable abuse. Many of them did not even achieve prominence, public attention or expressions of solidarity.

TERRITORY UNKNOWN AND UNEXPLORED

Although thousands of Italian journalists have already suffered threats and retaliations, the killings of journalists have shocked public opinion in Italy. But the worrying number of threats suffered by many journalists on regular basis was almost unknown. Set up in 2008, the independent observatory of Ossigeno per l'Informazione shone a spotlight on this phenomenon. The Observatory criss-crossed methodically "this unexplored continent" in which the media worked under threat. The Observatory examined it through the lens of investigative journalism and described it objectively and continuously for ten years, making its results known through periodic publications and reports. In this way the Observatory has added to the few cases of threats and intimidation published by the newspapers thousands of other unpublished reports. Through direct monitoring, the situation of Italian journalists facing threats was identified with verified facts, with all their

implications. The continuous monitoring and the flow of information about the results have been the catalyst for a wider awareness of the problem, have generated growing public attention, have involved the journalistic, political and trade union world, the Parliament, the Government and numerous national and international institutions.

THE PROBLEM IN FIGURES

Between 2016 and 2018, more than 3,721 Italian journalists, bloggers, video operators and photojournalists - each one listed with name and surname - were targets of threats, intimidation, assault, damage, targeted theft, serious abuse of rights (especially vexatious criminal complaints and lawsuits for unsubstantiated libel) and obstructed access to information that is evident but cannot be prosecuted by judicial means.

These attacks have gone unpunished in 91% of cases. The 3,721 examples represent the tip of the iceberg, which is estimated to be 15-16 times greater. The data produced by Ossigeno per l'Informazione, which, after ascertaining the facts, immediately published the names of each victim and the details of the attack. According to the data, about 38% of these attacks are due to the publication of news on the Mafia. As for the methods, about half were violent, 40% involved legal and judicial abuses and the remaining 10% were informal (pressure, exclusion from press conferences and other discriminatory acts).

In 2016, Ossigeno added to the data collected in the field the unpublished reports of the Government on the outcome of the proceedings for libel in Italy. They show that the complaints are very numerous (about six thousand a year are crime reports, one thousand more are claims for damages, and these are increasing by 8 per cent every year); they last a very long time (from two to six years for the first degree); 9 times out of 10 the

accusations are unfounded and each year 155 defendants (mostly journalists) are sentenced to prison for a total of 103 years of imprisonment. Usually these prison sentences are suspended or converted to fines. Still, they have a strong chilling effect. The managing editors of the newspapers, who are legally responsible for every published word, stand out among those sentenced to imprisonment. These are the most complete and objective data available.

WHO IS EXAMINING THE PHENOMENON AND HOW

Since 2015, the "Observatory on Journalism" of AgCom (the Italian communication authority) is studying the phenomenon, integrating Ossigeno's data with a survey among journalists.

In its 2017 report, AgCom judged that the two worst problems of Italian journalists are threats and job-insecurity. It also estimated that in Italy more than one in ten journalists (out of a population of 115,000 registered by the professional association) has received threats. Moreover, AgCom has pointed out that the Italian media publish very little information on these facts.

In 2017, the "Co-ordination Centre for the Defence of Press Freedom" was established at the Ministry of the Interior by a decision of the Minister of the Interior then in charge, Marco Minniti (replaced in June 2018 by Matteo Salvini). This body has the task of creating a confidential exchange of information between the Minister and officials of the Interior Ministry and representatives of the FNSI (the National Federation of the Italian Press) and of the Order of Journalists. It was created after the attacks on the journalist Daniele Piervincenzi and the video operator Edoardo Anselmi, which took place in Ostia on the 7th November 2017. So far the Centre has worked as a bureaucratic link between the ministry offices.

In 2018, the National Anti-Mafia Directorate (the section of the investigating magistracy specialising in investigations into Mafia crimes) launched a specific monitoring of Mafia-related threats targeting journalists. The Prosecutor Cafiero De Raho announced this for the first time in his interview for this Fact-Finding Mission.

HOW MUCH INFORMATION ON ORGANISED CRIME

We asked the respondents to say how much quality information the media produces on organised crime syndicates and corruption.

20% answered "a lot", 40% "a reasonable amount" and the other 40% "little". Therefore, the prevailing judgment is that there is an insufficiency that is both qualitative and quantitative. Information on this topic is not considered to be in line with general expectations, given that 95% of the interviewees attached "very much" importance to it and to the noble task of both highlighting it for citizens and helping the authorities to take prompt and adequate countermeasures.

"What is lacking - Cafiero De Raho maintains - is the representation of the Mafia phenomenon in its entirety and specifically in the areas where there are clear signs and manifestations. Among other things (the disengagement of many newspapers, Ed) it is the main cause that exposes journalists to risks and retaliation. It is clear that, since there are few who are dedicated to dealing with these issues, they become targets to be hit for the Mafias and other criminal organisations."

WHAT IS RESTRICTING INFORMATION?

Asked to say which is the main cause that is restricting adequate information on the crime syndicates, the respondents have mainly indicated (60%) the choices of publishers either for unex-

plained decisions (45%) or for connivance with organised crime (15%). A further 15% pointed to the intimidating climate and fear of retaliation, 10% named the low professional competence of journalists, 5% the job insecurity of journalism, and a further 5% the disadvantageous and punitive legislation.

FEAR AND THREATS

Let's begin with fear, the intimidating climate and the threats that in reality have a far greater impact than that which emerges from these opinions and weighs most heavily on front line reporters, and also on the editorial staff and on the publishers, as we will see.

"The newspapers avoid dealing with these issues - says journalist Nello Trocchia - first of all because it is more convenient to keep quiet about them, but also because they are afraid. The fear is due to the large number of direct or indirect threats, intimidation and physical attacks on newspapers and journalists. If you add to all this job-insecurity, you understand why in the end there is incomplete information."

The fear of retaliation is not unreasonable. It is well-founded taking into account what happens, as we have seen, to those who publish hitherto unpublished news that displeases mobsters, corrupt individuals and other actors who hold power or undertake criminal practices.

During recent trials, some Mafia defendants have blatantly claimed the right to resort to such reactions and have even asked the judges to punish the reporters they threatened. According to the logic of those defendants, the reporters who had described in newspapers the illegal ways in which their activities were carried out had damaged their businesses in an unjustifiable way. These episodes reveal most clearly what ide-

ology is behind the threats to journalists. Mafia activities and freedom of information are totally conflicting, as documented by the report titled "The Mafia-information antithesis" delivered by Ossigeno per l'Informazione to the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission.

According to this analysis, Mafia figures consider the free exercise of freedom of the press and of expression an inadmissible transgression of their code of silence that requires anyone, even journalists, to avert their gaze from their activities and their behaviour.

"The crime syndicates - says Cafero De Raho - want silence and therefore they intimidate, attack and kill journalists who attract the attention of the law-enforcement agencies by speaking about them."

Intimidation is very strong, especially in some areas. The local correspondents and reporters who work for the local newspapers, as we explain later, are exposed to more frequent risks and have less protection than their colleagues in the major national newspapers.

THE SPECIOUS LITIGATION

As we have seen in Italy, criminal complaints and civil cases for libel damages are used as threats to dissuade newspapers and journalists from publishing unwelcome news. They are a real scourge.

The interviewees consider them as a very effective and far too easy-to-use method of intimidation.

The Italian Parliament has known about the problem for decades. The law on the press that has been in force since 1948 forces reporters and the media to move forward across a kind of mine-

field. In fact, they can be accused of libel and end up on trial in relation to any published news - whether true or not. The crime is punishable by 6 years in prison. Some trials can last for more than ten years and are expensive. The lawsuits for compensation can ruin newspapers and journalists, as has happened in many cases. The only sure way to avoid these trials is self-censorship, to renounce the publication of unwelcome news. That is what many people do silently, especially when faced with the prospect of publishing news on Mafia events and corruption. The situation has worsened following some of the legal innovations introduced in 1984 by the Court of Cassation and the effects of the 1988 reform of criminal trials. The latter reform, by eliminating the accelerated trial, has lengthened by about 20 times the average time it takes to obtain the first hearing of a lawsuit.

Until a few years ago, journalists endured silently the vexatious felony complaints for libel and lawsuits used to intimidate them. They endured them with resignation and fatalism, as if they were their own individual problems. However, now the problem is perceived as a serious and systematic abuse of the law that is committed deliberately in order to limit the freedom of the press and of expression, as an unchallenged abuse. It is not blocked as it should and could be by applying the current regulations and introducing new ones. The extensive documentation of the phenomenon produced by Ossigeno per l'Informazione and already mentioned has contributed to making it more visible.

WHO EXPLOITS THE LAWSUITS AND WHY?

Many felony complaints for libel and lawsuits for damages come from people who claim respect for privacy and the absolute defence of their reputation, even if, according to the law, for their formal involvement in judicial inquiries or as

public figures, this right of theirs is attenuated or non-existent.

Often these individuals react disproportionately to the publication of unwelcome news. Most of the time they abuse the right to complain about the reporters to the judicial authorities, accusing the reporters of libel. It often happens that many of these unfounded complaints are highly effective and, have an intimidating and punitive effect even if at the legal level they usually end with the acquittal of the accused. These effects are unavoidable in Italy because the law and judicial practice allow anyone to abuse these formal complaints without incurring any penalty.

The interviewees mention the theme of impunity for these and other unjust actions towards journalists. Paolo Borrometi says: "When someone wants to hurt a journalist and realizes that he is isolated, he certainly goes on the attack. The fact that in Italy the crimes against journalists very often remain unpunished encourages these behaviors. They acted like that with me. Some mobsters have planned to kill me. They planned the plan on the phone between them. They said: sometimes we have to kill someone".

COMMENTS ON THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE DATA

The interviews and other sources have confirmed that the revealing official data from the Ministry of Justice on the outcome of libel trials mentioned at the beginning of this report are still not fully known. Only 55% of those interviewed agreed to comment on them and said they found confirmation in them of what they had learned from others or know from personal experience.

"Faced with these data we need to intervene. We need to introduce new rules to reduce complaints that are made for intimidation purposes.

We need a deterrent", said Under Secretary of State for Media Vito Crimi commenting upon the data from the Ministry of Justice on the enormous number of trials for libel (over 6000 every year) and on their outcome, which confirms the frequent abuse of the complaint procedure (over 90% of the accused are acquitted).

"These figures are the resounding demonstration of the abnormal use of lawsuits and trials for libel", says Marco Tarquinio, journalist and director of the daily *Avvenire*.

The lawyer Andrea Di Pietro sees in the high number of acquittals "the symptom of a praiseworthy sensitivity of the judiciary on the subject of freedom of information, demonstrated by the fact that, in the vast majority of libel proceedings, the public prosecutor proposes the acquittal of the defendants to the investigating judge (GIP) and often the proposal is accepted, as these data show. At the same time, the data show that 90% of proceedings can be classified as coming from unfounded or vexatious charges that the journalists have to endure even if they work correctly."

LOCAL NEWS REPORTERS ARE MORE EXPOSED TO RISKS

The risks of retaliation by organised crime are much higher for local newspapers and local news correspondents, said 85% of respondents. The journalists are poorly-armed combatants, deployed against very aggressive opponents.

On this "there is no doubt", says the lawyer Andrea Di Pietro.

Michele Albanese, a Calabrian journalist who is an expert on the "ndrangheta" crime syndicate, who has been under police protection since 2014 and is responsible for the legal affairs of the FNSI, confirms: "Journalists who, like me, work for re-

gional or local newspapers are among those who are more at risk", above all, he underlines, "if they continually cover criminal syndicates and live in the areas that are infested with them."

Investigative journalist Lirio Abbate adds: "Those who live and work in the suburbs, in the provinces, have to be more courageous if they want to talk about Mafia and corruption, if they want to practise journalism and fully respect the ethical standards."

Moreover, the Under Secretary Vito Crimi remarks "usually local newspapers do not have a legal department to defend them and to help them assess how to protect confidential sources or defend themselves from retaliation."

These reporters run more risks, says Marco Delmastro, Director of the Economic Statistics service of the AgCom, also because "local information exerts an enormous influence on local politics because it acts as a real arm of control on politics."

In many regions, he adds, there is now only one local newspaper or there are more than one but all belong to the same publisher. Therefore, there is no pluralism. "The creation of other newspapers should be encouraged, with forms of public intervention that are different from the current ones. But it is very difficult (...) The Agcom has calculated that in 14 out of 20 regions the RaiTre TV news program is the most important local information source. This demonstrates both the power of public service media and the weakness of all other media."

"Local businesses - says RAI journalist Maria Grazia Mazzola - finance small newspapers with advertising and therefore have the power to condition them. In turn, entrepreneurs are subjected to Mafia pressures."

THE MUD-SLINGING MACHINE

"We must not forget - says the editor-in-chief of "Corriere della Sera" Fiorenza Sarzanini - that local journalists live in small cities, in contact, even physical contact, with criminal figures. Whenever threats are made, those who work in a national newspaper are listened to more and receive more assistance than those who work in a local newspaper where publishers and colleagues find it hard to build a network of protection around them. Moreover, these local journalists are more exposed to campaigns to de-legitimise them."

What is the "mud-slinging machine"? According to the terminology that is now commonly used it is the campaign of delegitimisation conducted by one or more newspapers against someone, to discredit the person, to put the person in a bad light and to blame that person for unproven faults or behaviour, knowing that it to be false. It is, in essence, a serious abuse of the media and journalism, which are used as improper weapons. In Italy, this behaviour, when it does not imply more serious responsibilities, is treated as a serious form of libel. In reality, as proposed by the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission, it should be punished as a specific crime. The mud-slinging machine has been used many times against journalists who report events about Mafia and corruption.

The most shocking and recent campaign of delegitimisation against journalists to be examined and investigated at an official level was orchestrated between 2015 and 2018, in Sicily, by the former president of Confindustria Sicilia, the entrepreneur Antonello Montante, who had been considered a champion of the fight against the Mafia, against the reporters who first revealed the alleged connivance with criminal groups for which he is being tried.

Attilio Bolzoni is one of the journalists who has been subjected to the most serious actions of

Montante and he stresses the difficulties of freelance journalists, those external collaborators with newspapers who in Italy have insecure contracts, low pay and little or no support from the publisher in cases of threats or lawsuits.

"A reporter with little job security - says Bolzoni - can learn about an important fact, or a serious situation, but to write an article he must take the risk of defending himself at his own expense from a possible lawsuit, if the newspaper he writes for does not take on this obligation. With job-insecurity the journalist has low pay and no guarantees. He is in a very weak position. So, often, he writes articles only on low-level Mafia 'stracciona', on small-time gangsters and their accomplices that do not count for anything and therefore will not react. The small fry are shaken up - but without disturbing the major string-pullers."

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PUBLISHERS

The publishers are especially to blame for having reduced the 'coverage' of the crime syndicates on the grounds that readers were no longer interested in the subject, especially those in North and Central Italy. According to 67% of those interviewed, that choice is the primary reason much information on the Mafia theme not being published. It is based on the assumption that readers would be interested in learning only about the most sensational crimes: bloodshed, shocking sentences, and police operations with hundreds of arrests.

That choice was made in the nineties. It was openly admitted by some and tacitly adopted by all the others. Since then, almost all the media maintain a threshold that the information on the Mafia must exceed if it is to be included in the pages of newspapers and in television or radio programming. As a consequence they publish fewer and fewer investigations, less in-depth

analysis, fewer interviews, fewer editorials, fewer articles that can help readers find the thread that connects apparently different events. Most respondents believe that this is still the main reason for the current deficiencies.

As for the alleged motivation, it is a hypothesis that has never been demonstrated, as pointed out by the National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor, Federico Cafiero De Raho: "I just cannot understand on what monitoring, on which kind of statistics or other serious survey this choice was based (...) The opposite is true: knowledge about the crime syndicates makes it possible to fight them better."

Even the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Roberto Fico has challenged that assessment: "Journalistic information on organised crime and corruption is essential. The description of what is happening is central to the development of awareness and the conscience of citizens (...) for the fight against crime syndicates and the phenomena of corruption."

"Today, the Mafia - says Attilio Bolzoni - is strong but appears invisible. Reporting of it is minimal."

According to Fiorenza Sarzanini, the attitude of the newspapers in Northern Italy is changing, "because it is now clear that the crime syndicates also act outside their regions of origin. For example, in Piedmont and Lombardy, where they are engaged in money laundering and start to have control over parts of the regions."

CONNIVANCE

Connivance with the Mafia and the corrupt is the other - much more serious - charge made against publishers. Some investigations have shown the participation of mobsters, their accomplices or proxies in the ownership of some local newspapers.

"The greatest risk for us reporters - says Michele Albanese - is constituted by the presence of publishing initiatives, albeit small, that are controlled by the crime syndicates. This risk is more present especially in the southern Italian regions, it has been in the past, and it might happen again in the future."

The theme is that of "Mafia newspapers" and leads on to the problem of the "non-transparent ownership of small newspapers" which, as Pietro Grasso recalls, is not new, has been repeatedly reported to Parliament, but so far has not been resolved.

Certainly, the Prosecutor Cafiero De Raho agrees, "the conditioning and infiltration of organised crime in the publishing sector is one of the problems. Acquiring the ownership and control of companies in this business sector, as in other sectors, can be a goal of the crime syndicates. I remember that on the 24th of September 2018, in Italy, in the execution of a preventative measure, the judicial seizure of the ownership of the "La Sicilia" newspaper of Catania. The seizure was ordered of the majority of the shares owned by another newspaper, the "Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno" of Bari as well as two television stations."

Paolo Borrrometi, the Sicilian journalist who has been under police protection since 2014, recalls that when he collaborated with the newspaper 'La Sicilia' he was prevented from writing articles about the Mafia: "I was told explicitly that if I wanted to publish news about the Mafia, I must not do it on the pages of that newspaper. Subsequently I read the statements of some collaborators with the justice system on what happened in that newspaper and I followed the start of the legal proceedings against the publisher (Mario Ciancio Sanfilippo, Editor's Noto) who was accused of association with the Mafia. This made me understand more clearly why they asked me to stick to those rules."

Also Marco Delmastro has quoted the story of the newspapers confiscated to Ciancio to exemplify several of the problems facing reporters within the publishing companies for which they work.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

THE INVESTIGATIONS TURNED DOWN - According to the opinions collected, the editors-in-chief and the publishers say "no" to the journalists on their editorial staff and to external collaborators who propose to report investigations or write in-depth articles on the activities of the Mafia. According to the opinions expressed, the refusal has different motivations: in 40% of cases the issue is considered of little public interest; in 31% of cases it is due to connivance between the publishing company and the Mafia; in the remaining 19% of cases it is attributed to the fear of being intimidated, threatened, abused and retaliated against on a physical, economic, financial or legal level by the subjects involved (for their suspicious behaviour or for their involvement in judicial inquiries, in illicit affairs or relationships with people of dubious reputation).

For decades, this obstruction has prevented many reports from ending up in newspapers and on radio and television news, states Senator Pietro Grasso, who knows the subject well as a magistrate, as a judge in the Palermo mega-trial and then as the National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor. In fact, he recalls: "Some important investigative journalism did not find space in national newspapers, but only in journalists' books."

Because of this difficulty in reporting the news, many journalists have created blogs and online newsletters, becoming their own editors-in-chief and publishers. In this way, they have also assumed the risks of a publisher.

Faced with the impossibility of getting formal proof of what is alleged when an investigation is carried out into phenomena of Mafia or corruption, Graziella Di Mambro explained that, "a typical editor-in-chief proposes to eliminate the details and to publish an article that is only 'descriptive', therefore soft. For example, simply asking generically: Why in that particular town are there so many banks if people are poor? How come there are so many shops in an isolated area, in neighbourhoods with few inhabitants?"

"It is even more difficult to conduct television reportage. Many proposals are not accepted and remain unrealised", says Nello Trocchia.

Even those working in public sector radio and television experience difficulties in dealing with the Mafia topic. "The political pressure and the editorial line of the editor-in-chief or director carry a lot of weight", says Maria Grazia Mazzola. "Any proposal to investigate the Mafia meets resistance and obstacles. To avoid them you need to do a real slalom. I have often managed to overcome the resistance and paid a price for my stubbornness. But I am not giving up."

Fiorenza Sarzanini observes: "There are different sensitivities according to the prevailing historical climate."

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF JOURNALISTS

According to some, journalists do have a responsibility. Reporter Federica Angeli indicates that there is "poor preparation by reporters, both in Italy and even more in other countries."

"Compiling information on the crime syndicates is a thankless task that - says Marco Tarquinio - requires a lot of 'hidden' hard unglamorous work and creates serious problems. Not everyone is attracted to it, not a few avoid it. But a sizeable

group of my colleagues (also those with no job security) is dedicated to it with competence, passion and civic-minded courage and personal risk."

"Today more than yesterday, information tends to highlight and give space to news that tickles the fancy or the curiosity of readers", says the Under Secretary Vito Crimi, citing for example the space dedicated to "minor events" of the vice-president of Council Luigi Di Maio and the Mayor of Rome, Virginia Raggi: "The investigations into the Mafia are much more demanding. They involve the risk of conflicting with special interests and with the truth that some try to conceal at any cost."

Elisabetta Cosci, vice president of the National Order of Journalists, says that "the search for news lacks originality, also because journalists have to rely on legal documents."

The French journalist Marcelle Padovani, correspondent of the "Nouvel Observateur", indicated the same problem. Twenty years ago, he recalled, the worst flaw was that of being equidistant between the reasoning of the Mafia and those of the anti-Mafia. Today, however, reporters covering the Mafia go too far in the opposite direction. They are deployed on the side of the state and are likely to "become the mailbox of the prosecution, which is not the best stance for an investigative journalist".

Michele Albanese agrees: "Information on these issues is highly incisive, given that journalists who deal with the Mafia are constantly threatened."

Elisabetta Cosci shares the same fear, but believes that there is enough information on the subject.

"Often - says the Under Secretary Vito Crimi - newspapers do not call things by their real name, do not attribute to the Mafia the faults and the

negative impact they have. The same can be said about the phenomenon of corruption. Often the information is approximate and summary. Sometimes newspapers classify as corruption phenomena that have nothing to do with corruption. In this way, incorrect information is conveyed (...) Low professional competence is now a given. There is a lot of approximation in news items. "

THE CRISIS IN PUBLISHING

"In this phase - explains Marco Del Mastro - the market cannot finance news. This is the main fact. To say that the responsibilities and errors of publishers also weigh on the crisis is unfortunately not enough to resolve this problem, which has various consequences."

The crisis is reflected in the quality of news, the decline in sales and in ratings and employment.

According to data provided in February 2019 at the FNSI Congress, the number of journalists employed on permanent contracts has decreased by 20% in ten years (from 18,866 to 15,016), with a sharp acceleration in the last five years, and the annual salaries of new hires are low (under €30 thousand a year). The consequences, recalls the lawyer Andrea Di Pietro, are felt in the trade union, economic and social contexts. In this situation, reporting on the Mafia has become even more difficult, because this type of reporting is expensive, also because it involves the risk of legal action and compensation. These aspects, according to Di Pietro, are particularly pronounced for "local newspapers, which lack the organisation and economic strength to face legal disputes that are characterised by recklessness."

"In the face of economic difficulties - confirms Marco Delmastro - it has become even more difficult to produce quality journalism. In recent years the publishing crisis has made the problems that

were already present more dramatic. Among them I would like to underline: the weight of implicit threats coming from the crime syndicates, those that are directed at journalists without even raising their voices; the extensive self-censorship; the environment in which journalists work that pushes them to silence the news that - more than any other - could cause legal retribution or physical violence. It is the so-called chilling effect."

"To complicate matters further, it is sometimes the complexity of the publishing company for which journalists work. The most obvious example - says Delmastro - was provided by the recent case of the publisher Mario Ciancio Sanfilippo, on trial in Catania for participation in a Mafia-type association."

"Journalism that is under-resourced and is in crisis - says Under Secretary of the Interior Luigi Gaetti - is less free, more vulnerable to blackmail, and therefore more corruptible. A less profitable publisher is more afraid of the lawsuit or civil case that could result from an awkward investigation. Even more, journalists with little or no backing are more subject to attacks and blackmail that undermine their autonomy and their ability to investigate."

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING RADIO AND TV

According to 50% of respondents, information produced by the public radio and television services is also insufficient. "It does not do much", says the bulk of the interviewees. It is less than it could be. Others refrain from judgment. "Public television - says Michele Albanese - deals little with the topic of organised crime and the programs are broadcast in the late evening."

Elisabetta Cosci depicted the problem of exposure to risks in these terms: "A journalist on TV or

in the national press, when he is very committed to his work, runs high risks, similar to those of local journalists."

In fact, from 2017 to 2019 several reporters have suffered violent attacks precisely while preparing television reportage on Mafia activities. The judiciary has charged those responsible for the attacks suffered by some journalists whilst preparing a programme for "RAI" with its Mafia method as an aggravating factor.

Those who were attacked have received expressions of solidarity from the senior management of the state company and from many of their colleagues. But they also received severe criticism from other "RAI" journalists. On the social networks, heated discussions began. Some correspondents and chief editors have criticised their colleagues who were attacked. The most critical said that a journalist of "RAI" before turning on the camera must seek the consent of the people whom he intends to film. Some have criticised the journalists who are under police protection.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

Among the interviewees, there is a conviction that the same problems prevail, and the same shortcomings occur in other countries, but the comparisons are made with very different countries. Marco Delmastro has found "similar criticisms to the Italian ones in Eastern Europe". The German journalist Petra Reski said that in Germany the situation is [somehow] worse than in Italy "because of the lack of professional competence of journalists in matters of the Mafia and above all because the libel law is even more restrictive, making it impossible to name persons and tell the facts without being sued." "Elsewhere - observes Fiorenza Sarzanini - the problem does not present itself as it does in Italy, that is with very organised and structured criminal organisations.

But, as in Germany, its effects are unavoidable."

"Criminal organisations take advantage of the regulatory void to move to those European Union countries where they can carry out their activities by encountering fewer obstacles", says Michele Albanese.

Nello Trocchia adds, "In Europe there are countries who still do not dare call crime syndicates by their names. In some countries where Mafias have existed for years associating with the Mafia is not a crime."

Only 40% of the interviewees who consider things are better elsewhere point to the model of the Anglo-Saxon world where, it is said, journalism does more and has more influence because it has credibility and conducts its activity with broad public recognition. "In those countries - observes Lirio Abbate - if a newspaper reveals a scandal, it can cause the resignation of powerful individuals. This does not happen in Italy. The political world can attack the media without any problem in order to discredit them."

The lawyer Giulio Vasaturo recalls that in Italy libel is punishable by six years of imprisonment and that "freedom of information finds a more concrete and incisive recognition in all the western countries in which a prison sentence is not envisaged."

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING NEWS ABOUT CRIME SYNDICATES

"The press - says Federica Angeli, under police protection since 2013 - has the task of discovering negative social activity of general public interest and making it known whilst it is taking place, of reporting on these activities before they can produce worse problems. In my case, in 2013, when I described as 'Mafia' that criminal phe-

nomenon that I had discovered in action at Ostia, there were still no trials or judgements to prove it. Only in 2018, finally, what I had discovered and dared to call by its name was also recognised as such by the magistracy in Rome.”

All the interviewees, like her, attribute to the new reporting on the Mafias “much” or “very much” importance, above all for this reason. Because reporting the facts plays an irreplaceable educational role, says Marco Tarquinio. Information can make citizens fully aware of the damage that organised crime causes to society and helps them to better defend themselves against pitfalls and dangers, to break the climate of acquiescence with which the crime syndicates surround themselves.. Moreover, this information contributes to the success of the fight against widespread illegality, which cannot be conducted only by investigators and magistrates but must also develop at the social, cultural and educational levels. “I do not think the Mafia is intimidated by the newspapers - underlines Fiorenza Sarzanini - but certainly the media’s attention creates problems for the criminal organisations, as is shown.”

“Some empirical evidence, some qualitative studies - confirms Marco Del Mastro - show that, where newspapers have started to deal with the crime syndicates, there have been very significant positive results at the cultural, judicial and social levels.”

Reporting on organised crime is very important also because, recalls the lawyer Andrea Di Pietro, it is able to reveal “phenomena not yet identified by the judiciary.” This is an important fact, on the understanding that it is up to the judiciary to ascertain the actual responsibilities.

With their articles, says Graziella Di Mambro, in many cases journalists “turn the spotlight on what appear to be ‘simple’ anomalies and lack of

transparency in administrative activity and only afterwards and thanks to these articles does an investigation begin.”

“The journalists - underlines Pietro Grasso - make a great contribution to the search for truth when they add information to that of the investigators, not when they try to reveal the investigators’ documents.”

“Journalism - says Paolo Borrometi - can give voice and force to the complaints of citizens who, especially in some areas, have the perception that the state is absent and it is not even worth reporting the illegality since the complaints would not be accepted. Faced with this situation, journalists have a fundamental role: to collect the formal complaints and publish them to make them known to all and thus prevent them from falling into a void.”

OTHER MEDIA

“And social networks? They have assumed a fundamental role, they have become an outlet for any citizen (...) but - observes Vito Crimi - at the same time, sometimes, the threat or retaliation comes through the same social networks or other channels via the Internet. Many people, in addition to journalists, have received threats - even quite openly - on their social profiles or among the comments.”

ALL THE FAULT OF THE MAFIA?

Awareness of Ossigeno’s monitoring data on the most serious violations of freedom of information and expression in Italy is high and shows that they constitute a reference point for everyone. One of the interviewees, the journalist Attilio Bolzoni, noted that the many cases of intimidation and threats documented by Ossigeno must be added to many others that remain secret because the

victims do not have the strength to denounce them, because intimidation is carried out internally, because it is the result of a general intimidatory climate, without an explicit threat.

According to Delmastro, the large number of threats made known by Ossigeno should not be surprising, because "probably the same happens in other countries as well. If other states carried out the same type of active monitoring, we would probably learn that in other countries too there is a high number of threats. Moreover, international statistics already tell us that in France and Great Britain, in some contexts, the crime rate is higher than in Italy. The threats and intimidation of journalists are likely to be more numerous in those contexts. Certainly, in many countries, threats to journalists are largely underestimated. In Italy the phenomenon is monitored with continuity and in depth. In other countries the observation is more sporadic and superficial and the data collected are not homogeneous. Some countries take no account of threats; they merely record the murders of journalists. The widely requested harmonisation at a European level in this field is still not there. In this situation, any comparison on a European scale is difficult, not to say impossible."

"Certainly - says Elisabetta Cosci - the Mafia plays a very active role, but we must not forget that many threats have a very different origin. For example, the political world. Just think about how political power has acted towards the press in recent times. This aggressive attitude is a dangerous new arrival that damages press freedom. It is no coincidence that our President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, has deemed it appropriate to intervene numerous times."

"The data from Ossigeno - says Vito Crimi - show, among other things, that it is not just the Mafia that threatens journalists. The threats also come from politicians, from the business and profes-

sional world and from other people who, in various ways, consider using retaliation tools against journalists to silence them. All this says that it is not the Mafia that is the main reason for threats to Italian journalists."

"The great number of threats - Undersecretary Luigi Gaetti maintains - certainly has to do directly with the greater aggressiveness and contempt of organised crime. But also with something else: the deteriorating conditions of journalists' independence linked with the deterioration in their working conditions."

"The high number of intimidations and violence against journalists is explained not only by the Mafia - Nello Trocchia explains - it is due to a more general problem: the de-legitimisation of the role of the journalist by the political and business worlds. The social role of journalists is recognised less and less. This explains, for example, the case of a colleague of mine who was publicly slapped by a politician for asking simple questions."

"There is no lack of common violence - says the lawyer Di Pietro - which has its roots in a cultural intolerance of Italians towards reporting, which is often considered intrusive, partisan and de-legitimised by the lack of professional independence."

Federica Angeli agrees and adds: "The high number of Italian reporters under police protection or threat is mainly due to the fact that the profession of journalists now appears to be the only one in the front line against the crime syndicates. But it is also a fact that there are many journalists who do their job without the precautions that are necessary in this field."

"The real threats, those that put the life of a reporter at risk, almost always come from the crime syndicates", says Michele Albanese, who then

asks to keep the threats to journalists coming from the Mafia separate from those who have a different origin.

According to Lirio Abbate, "the list of journalists threatened in Italy is so long because Ossigeno has shed light on this phenomenon, giving publicity to this problem and to individual cases. It was right to do so. But I fear that it also produced a negative side-effect: it brought out the myth maniacs, those journalists who jostle to become one of these statistics without real merit, people who want to wear the title of a journalist under threat despite having suffered attacks that, in hindsight, should not be considered seriously intimidating."

POLICE ESCORTS AND OTHER PROTECTIVE SYSTEMS

The Italian system of protection of journalists under threat is among the best in the world, according to the interviewees. "Compared to that of other countries - says Elisabetta Cosci - the Italian system is the best. Just think about what happened in Malta. It seems that there were no adequate protective measures there. And what happened in Slovakia is another confirmation."

"It is among the best - according to Senator Grasso - even considering the number of subjects to be protected."

"The public security authorities make a commendable effort - says attorney Vasaturo - we have nothing to learn from other countries. Even in terms of the protection of journalists facing threats, the professionalism of our security apparatus is absolutely cutting-edge."

55% believe that this system which assigns armed police escorts, armoured cars and other forms of protection to those who have been threatened, is adequate to current needs. 10% consider it imperfect as it is difficult to access it. 10% consider it incomplete, because it adequately addresses only the problems of journalists at higher risk. 25% hold no view.

The first to consider it effective is the Prosecutor Cafiero De Raho, who describes it as follows: "It not only provides for the management and allocation of police escorts to journalists who ask to be protected, but also an active role for the investigative apparatus to discover and foil plans for retaliation and revenge attacks against journalists. For example, in the case of Michele Albanese, as in other cases, the Public Prosecutor's Office immediately informed the competent Prefect of the threats to the journalist that the investigators had discovered by listening to an intercepted telephone conversation. The Prose-

curator's office informed the Prefect without waiting for that information to be used in the criminal proceedings for which it had been obtained. At the same time, the Public Prosecutor's Office requested appropriate protective measures to be adopted urgently, as indeed happened."

"The main merit of the Italian protection system - says Lirio Abbate - is that it is based on risk prevention and has proved to be effective. However, it can be improved, at various levels. We must always improve the selection of the subjects who deserve this protection."

"It is undoubtedly adequate for the most exposed and most dangerous cases - says Senator Pietro Grasso - but at local level we need more preventative intervention."

"It saved my life - says Paolo Borrrometi - but it did not prevent that, after the first threats, I was assaulted and beaten and that they set fire to my house. In that first phase, the authorities had assigned me so-called dynamic vigilance. Therefore, I would say that the current system of protection is effective, but it is difficult to have access to it. Some individuals remain excluded: I name someone as emblematic for everyone, that of Nello Trocchia."

Nello Trocchia laments an incomprehensible disparity in assessments from one city to another. "*The assignment of protection should not depend on the subjective assessment of individual prefects, as happens now,*" he says. To overcome this situation, he proposes that the evaluation method be codified.

Even Marilù Mastrogiovanni, a journalist under threat from Puglia, argues that the protection measures called "*dynamic vigilance*" are not very effective. One of the limitations is this: "*The jour-*

nalist is protected but not his family members, who are the weaker party. There is little hope for an upgrade since the law enforcement system does not even have the money to make photocopies."

Maria Grazia Mazzola says: "When some of my colleagues who are threatened and under police protection go on TV they make triumphalist statements. They say: 'Everything is okay because the state protects me.' And who protects everyone else? All those reporters who work in areas where there is a strong Mafia presence and forced to remain silent - who defends them? Let's face it: for one individual who is well protected by the state there are a hundred others that are not protected at all. Many things could be done. For example, put observers alongside journalists who conduct investigations into the Mafia who accompany them, even from a distance. They could be observers from NGOs. It is very important for a reporter to know that he is not alone when he goes into certain areas."

The interviewees agree, albeit with some differences, that the active monitoring of threats (which also envisages the timely public communication of the more serious acts of intimidation) is useful for the defence of the right to information and, in addition, reinforces the personal safety of reporters. The role of civil society in this field is considered necessary and useful, in order to highlight what is happening.

"Monitoring is important. It is also necessary - states the Attorney Cafiero De Raho - that nations strongly affirm the fundamental right of press freedom and freedom of expression, which demonstrates the right of everyone to freely communicate ideas, opinions and information that are current and of public interest. It is important that the individual States, in the activity of combatting organised crime, for which the Paler-

mo Convention is fundamental, should consider the need to establish a monitoring system of the most serious violations of these rights. It should aim at verifying the existence in each country of a specific legal framework for the defence of freedom of the press and suitable protection mechanisms, activated by the institutions of each country to safeguard press freedom and the safety of journalists. Intimidation, threats and abuses affect the rights of thousands of information workers."

"Without any doubt monitoring is useful. The meritorious work of Ossigeno and of associations of the same type - underlines Senator Grasso- is essential to bring to the public's attention every single case, and thus create a sort of communal escort for journalists under threat."

"Monitoring is also useful to scrutinise the work of the judiciary, to know what is being done to punish the attackers," says Trocchia. For the lawyer Di Pietro, "the work that Ossigeno per l'Informazione has carried out on this aspect since 2008 is fundamental to keep active attention on the phenomenon of threats to journalists."

"The active monitoring of unjustifiable attacks - says Paolo Borrometi - is fundamental. It is important to have bodies that monitor this phenomenon, which collect information, verify it and communicate it to the public and to the relevant authorities."

But these decisions are the exclusive responsibility of the authorities and should not be influenced by media campaigns, the respondents point out. Which decisions? The final verification of the truth of each individual threat, the assessment of its seriousness and the choice of whether or not to adopt individual or collective security measures. We must avoid, "any undue and dangerous public emphasis by third parties. The sensitivity surrounding the verification of a Ma-

fia threat requires maximum discretion”, says the lawyer Vasaturo.

“Of course - Lirio Abbate says - the last word belongs to law enforcement experts. It is up to them to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether and to what extent the risks are real, whether to propose the application of a protection measure and of what kind.” The Deputy Editor of L'Espresso, who has been under police protection since 2007, recalls: “The choice to assign protection or not and to choose which type and which level of protection to assign, is up

to the Committee for Public Order and Safety. Prefects and law enforcement officers are part of it. It is the Committee that decides, based on the information it receives from the investigative bodies. Every effort must be made to ensure that this technical information is as accurate as possible.”

“Not all the threats are equal - says Marilù Mastrogiovanni - and not all journalists are equal. If you muddy the waters somebody in bad faith gains and the one who really is a victim is overlooked.”

PROPOSALS

WHAT TO DO - WHERE TO START

The interviewees were asked to formulate proposals to solve the problems that obstruct reporting on the crime syndicates and corruption, pointing out first of all the target, the sector (journalism, editorial, legislative, contractual) on which to focus efforts from a strategic point of view. Over half of respondents, 55%, indicated the publishers' level, 15% at the level of journalism and 10% on employment contracts.

MORE COMMITMENT FROM THE PUBLISHERS

“The publishers - says Cafiero De Raho - should concentrate a greater part of their commitment on the fight against the crime syndicates. This task is not just for law enforcement and the judiciary.”

Michele Albanese: *“Well-defined policies are needed for the publishing sector, with a regulatory obligation for publishers to provide legal assistance and more stable journalistic work contracts.”*

Marco Delmastro: *“Faced with the crisis in the sector, the biggest role today could be played by television because it has held up better to the crisis. It would have the economic capacity to do it. Often this does not happen because the 'stories', especially the local ones, risk not having a viewing audience. In a situation where the market fails, it is difficult to find a solution. We should ask the public service to do more. It should take on a wider social role. In the United States, where there is less faith in public service, there is patronage. This culture does not exist in Italy and even patronage presents risks.”*

COOPERATION BETWEEN PUBLISHERS

Marco Delmastro: *“Observing these events, I noticed with astonishment that on these issues there is not a great spirit of collaboration between journalists who suffer threats or even between publishers. Yet the newspapers could form consortia to address these issues with much more force and so reporters covering organised crime would be less vulnerable. In order to defend an important public good such as freedom of information,*

political and ideological distinctions should be overcome. In France, for example, they did it to expose fake news, with the 'CrossCheck' online collaborative journalism platform that put together publishers with very diverse political positions and ideologies."

DEFENCE OF JOURNALISTS

Three hitherto unpublished proposals, of great interest for defending journalists against specious accusations and to put an end to the impunity for the crimes committed against them, came from the Procurator Cafiero De Raho:

1. Discourage the vexatious complaints for libel, systematically sentencing for aggravated slander the complainants when their complaints ended with the acquittal of the accused people.
2. Give journalists a legal status more appropriate to face their risks and professional responsibilities.
3. Create specialised public prosecutors for crimes committed against journalists, in order to reduce impunity.

AGGRAVATED SLANDER

"Whoever files a complaint for libel - explained the National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor - starts a criminal proceeding against some people. If judges say the complaint was groundless, those who initiated it should be charged with aggravated slander. This modification should be introduced into the penal code to pursue whoever acts in this way to prevent the free exercise of the right to information. It is something needed to be able to discourage both the vexatious proceedings and lawsuits and the reckless complaints. It is necessary because, in general, the journalist is weaker

than the people or entities who are the subject of his news reporting."

LEGAL STATUS

The Prosecutor Cafiero De Raho asks the legislature to assign for journalists a legal status that is more appropriate to their responsibilities, not limited only to the listing of ethical duties, as it is now. De Raho elaborates that, "*The legal status must correspond to the dignity and role of the journalist and give him or her the possibility of reporting the truth without worrying about the consequences. In addition, the legal status must protect the journalist from exploitative and specious legal actions, allowing only accusations in which it is clear the journalist is responsible for the invention of fake news or the conscious choice to have used decidedly offensive expressions. Instead, whenever he has correctly exercised the right to information, the journalist should be protected.*"

SPECIALIZED ATTORNEYS

"It is right - continues the Prosecutor Cafiero De Raho - to envisage magistrates specialising in this matter (to deal with the crimes committed against journalists and proceedings in which journalists are prosecuted, ed). It could be the tool to guarantee for journalists assessments that effectively meet the needs of a free press, as our Constitution maintains."

JOB INSECURITY

"The first problem to be solved is that of job insecurity and often very low pay," says the President of the Chamber, Roberto Fico.

Elisabetta Cosci agrees: "The first goal to be achieved is the just economic recognition for journalism work. Whoever deals with controversial issues must have a proper contract and have

an adequate salary. We need to pay the reporters who deal with awkward topics better; they must have a contractual framework and have adequate remuneration. You cannot pay five Euros an article to a collaborator who covers the Mafia."

Graziella Di Mambro sums up: *"Pay organised crime reporters better"*.

A *"media escort"* - some propose to provide protection to journalists who are threatened with the so-called *"media protection"*, i.e., by giving them high visibility in the newspapers.

Elisabetta Cosci explained how important it is for the Journalists' Association to demonstrate being on the side of journalists under threat, also by a physical presence, during trials and on other public occasions, forming from time to time that cordon of solidarity defined as the *"media escort"* and encouraging the media to give maximum attention to those events.

"Unfortunately - says the vice president of the Order - there is not always this sense of sharing and solidarity in the category of journalists. However, in recent years the situation has improved. Even with the fact that the work of Federica Angeli was picked up by television, gave her a form of media coverage."

"The idea of a 'media escort' is interesting, but - observes Marco Delmastro - I believe that this solution cannot offer a lasting protective effect over the long term, as would be necessary."

AGAINST SPECIOUS LAWSUITS

The perception of the problem is clear and expresses itself in the unanimous request to oppose the abuses, introducing by law one or more deterrents. The Italian Parliament has been discussing it for twenty years. The President of the

Chamber, Roberto Fico, told us: *"I hope that Parliament can pick up the line of reasoning that was interrupted with the end of the last parliamentary term."*

According to the respondents, the reform should model itself on the English system introduced in 2009 and according to 35%, it should provide for the deposit of between 10% and 50% of the amount of damages claimed as compensation. This sum should be paid to the accused if the judge rejects the claim.

At least, says Marco Tarquinio: *"It should be established that, whenever the case is judged to be specious the complainant must pay court costs, always and without the costs being shared between the parties as unfortunately we are accustomed to do."*

AGAINST PREVENTATIVE WARNINGS

It would be equally necessary, Maria Grazia Mazzola points out: *"To change the rules that permit preventative warnings to prevent the broadcasting or publication of reporting. Some warnings are really threats. I have received many. I have not suspended the publication of an investigation but I have paid a price for it."*

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO THE DOCUMENTS

Graziella Di Mambro: *"In the case of economic crime by the Mafia syndicates (the main expression of the phenomenon) there is a barrier to access to documents. On subcontracts, there is no transparency and yet the penetration of the criminal clans in the economy takes place largely through sub-contracts. How does it work? Although a "clean" company wins a tender, it then subcontracts work to two, three, four other companies. The laws on money laundering are strin-*

gent and very useful, but journalists do not have access to the information on which the authorities act. Journalists have no privileged access to the databases of official auctions, the Land Registry and the Chamber of Commerce. To obtain information, journalists must act undercover and must be helped by confidential sources, internal to these organisations. This barrier should be broken down. Journalists' access to this precious information is essential. Even the secrecy surrounding the accounts of the Foundations, including bank foundations is no longer justifiable and should be repealed."

TRAINING

Graziella Di Mambro: *"In order to increase the number of journalists who are dedicated to investigations on crime syndicates and corruption, specific training is essential for both fellow journalists and publicists. They should be offered the opportunity to take courses in criminal procedure and administrative law, at least the basics. I believe that it should be done free of charge by the Journalists' Order."*

MORE MONITORING

Strengthen and extend independent monitoring of the threats, equipping observers with the necessary resources through public funding. Establish a national public platform with an independent authority similar to the one created by the Council of Europe for the protection of journalism

and the safety of journalists to allow specifically accredited civil society organisations to report the most serious attacks on freedom of information with the assurance that they will reach all the competent authorities.

MORE INVESTIGATIONS

"We at the weekly magazine L'Espresso - explains the deputy editor Lirio Abbate - practise investigative journalism and we see that this is reflected in good results on sales at newsstands. Therefore, in the face of the sales crisis, other publishing groups could also carry out investigations. However, they do not do it. Why? Probably, because investigative journalism seriously upsets the powerful."

ASSISTANCE TO THOSE WHO ARE THREATENED

Many sued journalists are not able to pay legal defence costs. Some get assistance from the journalists' union, others from the free Legal Aid Office of Ossigeno per l'Informazione and the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom. Nevertheless, the funds available are very limited, and these organisations must unfortunately decline many requests. Because of the threats, many journalists lose sources of income or their job itself or are forced to move to other cities. Currently nobody takes care of such serious economic consequences.

APPENDIX – HISTORY OF THE MAFIA

HOW TO BREAK DOWN THE WALL OF SILENCE

"I remember the time when some people, expressing a true or a pretended doubt, still wondered if the Mafia really existed, in their neighbourhood, in their region, in the entire country. Then it became no longer possible to doubt it, thanks to the reporting of journalists on this subject", said Marcelle Padovani, a French journalist and writer, the veteran correspondent from Rome of the Nouvel Observateur. "Since then much has changed, even within the world of journalism. Today no journalist, as my colleague Francesco La Licata often remembers, would dream of writing the alleged Mafia gangster Michele Greco in a newspaper. Nobody today would take care to dedicate a page of his newspaper to the point of view of the mobster, and another to the point of view of the antimafioso, as was done at the time of the Palermo mega-trial, as is still done today on other topics in respect of a certain 'balanced' idea of objectivity."

Until fifty years ago, the Mafia was a taboo subject even for the Italian media. Few dared to talk about it, while most newspapers remained silent. They only intervened to criticize those who spoke about it, to deny that there were criminal organizations of that sort, that is, they drew strength and power from systematic intimidation and connivance with the political and economic world. The newspapers that denied the existence of the Mafia repeated the hypotheses of ministers, bishops and entrepreneurs who openly stated that, *"The Mafia does not exist, it is an invention – and they often added – those who are listed as dangerous Mafia are nothing but bandits, minor criminals who slaughter each other, eliminate each other, and therefore it is not necessary to devote to them any special political, investigative and media attention."* All this was said in spite of what the facts showed: hundreds of unpunished

murders, of barbaric executions, of bomb attacks that everyone knew who to blame, but that the magistracy was not able to punish despite much evidence collected in monumental police reports and transferred to court files.

The police arrested small-scale Mafia *"foot soldiers"*, who were the men who collected the protection money for the gangs, or those who stole flocks and herds, or controlled the prices in the markets. Mafia foot soldiers were also the ones in charge of recruitment or those who punished ferociously anyone who opposed the Mafia impositions. *"Only the remnants fly"*, it was said. Nobody managed to touch the Mafia bosses, the principals, who forced their accomplices to maintain with terror an absolute silence. The unwritten law of omertà made witnesses to crimes mute, blind and deaf. Those who violated the convention of keeping silent when witnessing or partaking in Mafia dealings faced death. The Mafia executed people with macabre rituals that expressed symbolically which transgression they had punished, to make an example out of their victims. Attilio Bolzoni recalled in this regard the image in Giuseppe Ferrara's movie *"The stone in the mouth"*, which was released in 1971.

THE CHALLENGE OF TODAY

In the Fifties, Italian newspapers did not dare to publish the names of the Mafia bosses, as it was too dangerous for them. It was the legendary newspaper *"L'Ora di Palermo"*, famous throughout the world, for being the first to publish the names of the Mafia bosses in charge. It published the list and on the front page the giant photo of the head of *"Cosa Nostra"*, Luciano Liggio, under the title in huge characters *"This man is dangerous"*. It was an open challenge to Mafia power. As a result, the *"Cosa Nostra"* reacted instantly, with

a bomb attack that damaged the print works. The journalists of *"L'Ora di Palermo"* were threatened and for a long time they had to live under police protection. The brave action by the journalists of *"L'Ora di Palermo"*, opened the first breach in the wall of silence like the impact of a battering ram. After that, slowly, things began to change, above all on the political level.

In 1962 the Parliament confirmed definitively the existence and the social danger of the Mafia by establishing the first Parliamentary commission of inquiry in the history of the Italian Republic into that phenomenon which manifested itself with multiple crimes. Many peculiar characteristics of this political-criminal phenomenon were analysed and described with many examples in the first monumental Report that the Commission delivered to Parliament in 1976, after thirteen years of investigation. The activity of the Commission greatly enlarged the breach opened by the newspaper *L'Ora*. It created in the wall of silence a great gap. The world of journalism greatly benefited and began to devote more attention and more space to the affairs of the Mafia.

THE LAW THAT PUTS AN END TO IMPUNITY

The Commission's proposals remained closed in a drawer for 5 to 6 years. Only in 1982 did the Italian Parliament draw its first conclusions by approving the historic Rognoni-La Torre Law. It inserted in the penal code a radical innovation: the crime of Mafia association. Since then, it has been possible to condemn with severe sentences (from 10 to 26 years in prison) whoever participates in a Mafia organization simply by being part of it. Both chamber of the Parliament that big step pushed and dragged by the wave of emotion and indignation aroused by the assassination of dozens of politicians who had formulated those proposals, of magistrates and prefects who called for their implementation and journalists who had

documented the crimes and the collusion of the Mafia.

Introducing that new crime was not easy. A colossal collective effort was necessary involving jurists, politicians, parliamentarians, intellectuals of various political orientation. Some paid that commitment with their life, while others suffered threats and retaliation. Their family members also ended up as targets. Many began to live under police protection, to travel in armoured cars, protected by armed escorts, losing their freedom of movement.

That Rognoni-La Torre Law has had a great impact. It allowed Italy to disrupt powerful criminal organizations that until now were invincible. It allowed the confiscation from the Mafia of illicit assets worth of hundreds of billions. It put an end to the historical impunity of the heads of the criminal organisations. The reduction of sentences and the protection programs granted to *"repentant"* mobsters who agreed to cooperate with justice have allowed the investigators to know the hidden secrets of Cosa Nostra and the names of those responsible for an infinite number of unpunished crimes. Hundreds of powerful criminal bosses have been tried and sentenced to centuries of prison. Prosecutors have reconstructed and proven in the courts their bloody and fearsome deeds. Moreover, newspapers have been able to report them extensively as never before to their readers.

"ELITE" CRIMES AND THE MEGA-TRIAL

A long, exciting, and at the same time distressing season ended in the late nineties, the Mafia no longer was an interesting issue for readers. Sicilians still remember that season as *"the season of elite crimes"*. The Mafia spilt lot of blood as a result; they brutally murdered magistrates, politicians, police officers, journalists, trade union-

ists and activists. But precisely since that season many Italians have learned what the Mafia really is, how intertwining with legal power and connivance with public authorities distinguish organized crime from common crime; how the bosses protect their business and their crimes: deleting the evidence, detecting investigations, intimidating or bribing politicians, judges, investigators, witnesses and journalists. That season, culminated in the mega trial of Palermo (1986-1992) which remains a milestone, both for legal history and for the reporting on the Mafia.

WHEN THE NORTHERN ITALIAN NEWSPAPERS ENTERED THE ARENA

The turning point was the massacre of Via Carini. In that massacre the Mafia ambushed and assassinated the Carabinieri general Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa and his young wife in Palermo, on September 3rd 1982. That slaughter shook Italy. For the first time, national newspapers also entered the arena. Many special correspondents of the newspapers of North and Central Italy rushed to Palermo where they remained for a long time becoming experts on the Mafia, valiantly supporting their Sicilian colleagues, helping them to break the historical isolation and reach a wider audience. For the first time journalists from other regions became competent reporters, experts and narrators of this complex phenomenon. For many years, the newspapers with their reportage have kept the spotlight of the news on what was happening in Sicily, in Calabria, in Campania, showing that those events directly concerned the rest of Italy.

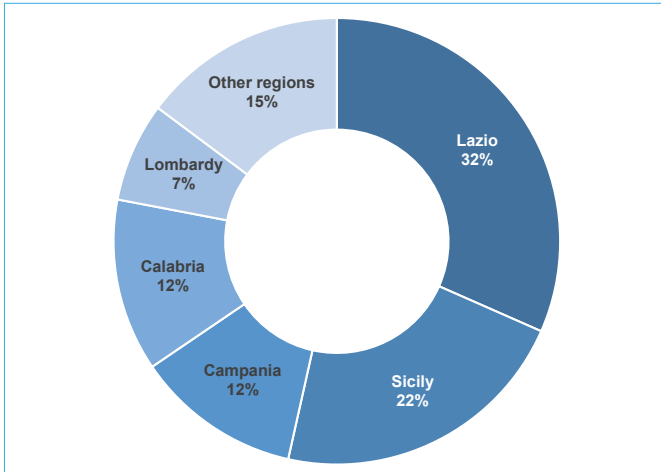
However, the new spirit did not spread to everyone. Even some Sicilian newspapers remained immune and continued as before.

Claudio Fava in the book *"The Mafia commands in Catania 1960/1991, Editori Laterza"* wrote: The

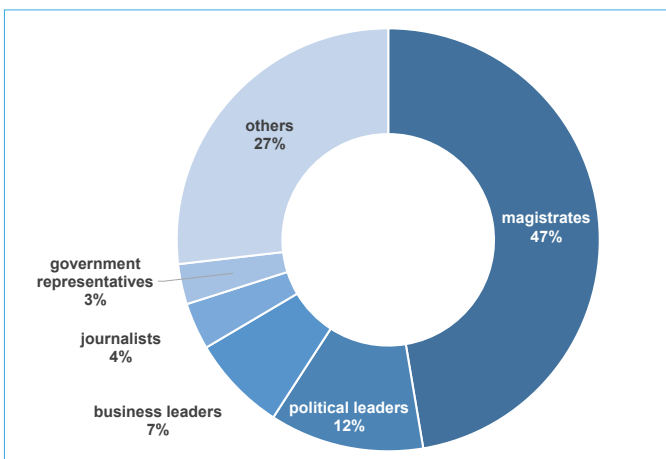
newspaper La Sicilia, shamelessly succeeded for many years to suppress from its reporting the word Mafia: rarely used, and only to report it in news of other cities, never to Catania. In October 1982, when all the Italian newspapers dedicated their headlines to the issue of the first arrest warrants for the massacre in Via Carini, the only newspaper not to publish the name of the indicted was La Sicilia. A well-known boss was how the Ciancio owned newspaper referred to him. All the other newspapers in the country named him as Nitto Santapaola. The name of the head of the Mafia in Catania will remain absent from the chronicles of his city for many years still: and if he appears there, it will only be to give due prominence to the news of his acquittal, or to remind them of the death of his father, with a faint paragraph "

APPENDIX – HOW THE ITALIAN PROTECTION SYSTEM WORKS

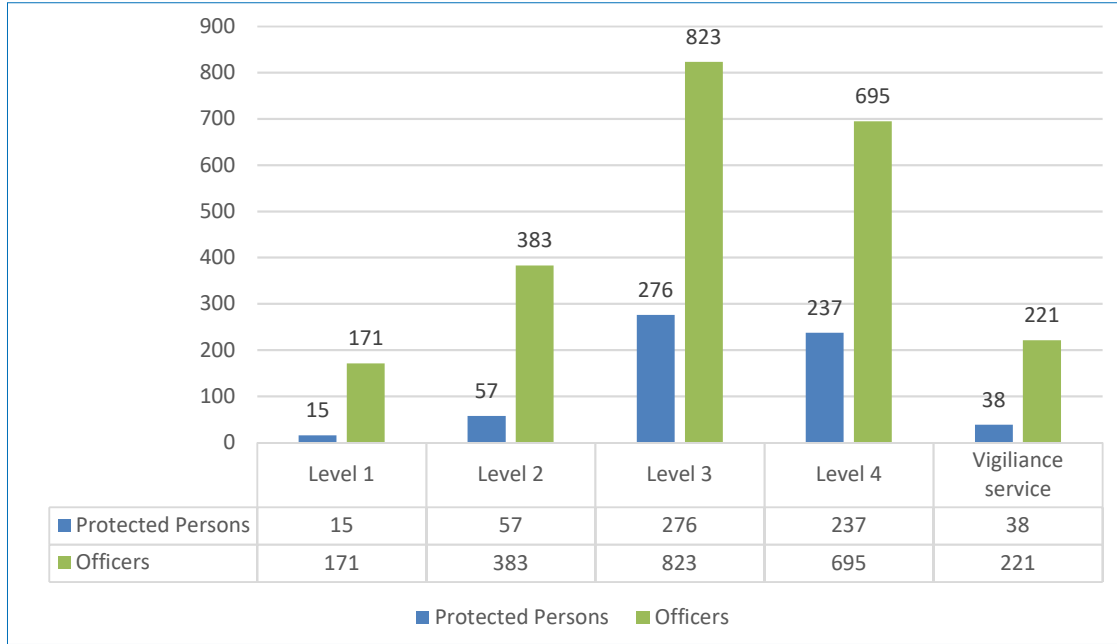
There are 21 Italian journalists considered to be at high risk and protected with armed police escorts from the law enforcement agencies. They represent 3,5% of the individuals to whom the State provides this form of protection as it considers them at high risk of the Mafia or other groups attacking them.



In total, law enforcement agencies protect 585 individuals with armed escorts: 277 magistrates (65%), 69 political leaders (16%), 43 business leaders (10%), 21 journalists (5%), 18 government representatives (4%) and 157 others (27%).



Half of the threatened under police protection are in two Regions: Lazio (31.6%) and Sicily (21.9%). Followed by: Calabria (12.5%), Campania (12%), Lombardy (7.2%), other regions (14.8%).



THERE ARE FOUR LEVELS

Italian authorities classify protected persons into four levels of risk, each of which corresponds to a different degree of protection. Level 1 is that of maximum alert. It provides for the use of multiple armoured cars. It covers 15 protected people and involves 171 officers. A further 57 people have Level 2 protection, that is, a police escort with an armoured vehicle for each protected person and employing 383 officers in total. Another 276 citizens have Level 3 with a car that is also armoured vehicle and 823 officers deployed. The remaining 237 have a Level 4 police escort, each protected person provided with an unarmoured car and 695 officers deployed. There are also 38 permanent vigilance services with 221 people deployed (18 police officers, 56 Carabinieri and 147 soldiers). The "National Committee for Order and Public Safety" decide on who received armed protection and the level of protection based on technical and other information provided by the Prefects. We display the most up-to-date data as of November 9th, 2018 from the Ministry of the Interior.

WHO PROPOSES THE PROTECTION

The National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor, Federico Cafiero De Raho, described the practice that the Italian authorities follow when a journalist is threatened or attacked:

"When there is a threat or violence, a serious timely investigation, aimed at examining in depth the context, is opened in the judicial office of the Public Prosecutor's Office. Where it appears to be a Mafia context, one moves urgently to acquire the evidence, activating personal precautionary measures when the conditions are met. In addition, in parallel the Authorities enact personal protection measures for the journalist with periodic or permanent surveillance at home and at the workplace. They also assign law enforcement officers to the person with an ordinary or armoured car. Several journalists have Level 3 or Level 4 protection. When some journalists carry out investigations in the territory of the Mafia, the Questor or the Provincial Commandant of the Carabinieri proceeds to observe at a distance, in order to prevent acts of violence. Where the investigations conducted by the Public Prosecutors highlight elements of risk for journalists, they immediately report them to the Prefect, who is the provincial governmental authority for the application of protective measures. In these contexts, the National Anti-Mafia and Counter-Terrorism Directorate is also constantly monitoring in order to identify any linking elements or investigative coordination at a national level."

HIGH COSTS

On the 9th of November 2018, sources from the Ministry of the Interior reported that, on the previous day, the "National Committee for Public Order and Public Security had met to examine the overall situation of the protection system and achieve a goal set by Minister Matteo Salvini: cost reduction. To this end, the Committee had decided to

check the protection measures assigned, one by one, in order to ascertain whether for someone the need for protection had diminished, and thus lead a reduction in their protection measures to prevent the wasting of state resources.

POLEMICS AND PROTESTS

In February 2019 it was decided to revoke the police protection of the television journalist Sandro Ruotolo. The decision, communicated ten days in advance to the interested party caused a wave of protests and resulted in its amendment before the deadline. In previous months, similar protests resulted after some statements by the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini. The minister had hypothesized the possible revocation of the police protection of the journalist and writer Roberto Saviano. Saviano had criticized the political decisions of Salvini calling him *"the minister of the underworld"*, a historical epithet with which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Gaetano Salvemini attacked Giovanni Giolitti.

List of interviewees (in alphabetical order)

- Lirio Abbate
- Michele Albanese
- Federica Angeli
- Cecilia Annesi
- Lorenzo Bagnoli
- Attilio Bolzoni
- Paolo Borrometi
- Federico Cafiero De Raho
- Elisabetta Cosci
- Vito Crimi
- Marco Delmastro
- Graziella Di Mambro
- Andrea Di Pietro
- Roberto Fico
- Luigi Gaetti

Biographies of the interviewees

Lirio Abbate – Investigative journalist, Mafia expert, he is deputy editor of the weekly magazine "L'Espresso". He lives in Rome. Since 2007, he has been assigned a police protection service. The authorities assigned a protection escort to him after repeated death threats from Mafia circles: first time when he lived in Palermo and worked for the Italian news agency Ansa. His investigation "The Four Kings of Rome" revealed the criminal activities called "Mafia Capital", anticipating judicial investigations. He received many awards, including international awards. He is a Merit Officer of the Republic and a founding member of Ossigeno per l'Informazione.

Michele Albanese – Calabrian journalist, he writes for the Quotidiano del Sud and is a contributor to ANSA. Since 2014 he lives under police protection due to threats he received because of writing articles about the 'ndrangheta. He is a member of the National Council of the FNSI (National Federation of the Italian Press) and he is responsible for the legal affairs education projects of the journalists' union. He is a member of Ossigeno per l'Informazione. He is a Grand Officer of the Order or Merit of the Italian Republic.

Federica Angeli – Journalist, editor and judicial reporter of the newspaper La Repubblica, lives in Ostia (Rome). In 2013, she suffered serious threats and since then she has been protected with an armed escort. In 2018, authorities extended her protection to her children, too. Her investigations about the Mafia in Ostia prepared the ground for investigations and trials concluded with numerous sentences. She is a Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Cecilia Annesi – Freelance journalist and co-founder of the Investigative Reporting Project Italy (IRPI). Graduated in Journalism and Sociology at the City University of London. In 2011, she co-directed Toxic Europe, an investigative documentary that won the Best International Organized Crime Report 2011 Award and was nominated for the 2012 Data Journalism Award. Together with her colleagues from IRPI she deals with Italian Mafias at a transnational level.

Lorenzo Bagnoli – Freelance journalist, he is a member of the board of the IRPI centre for investigative journalism. He holds a Master degree in Journalism from the Catholic University of Milan. He is working in the field of transnational investigative journalism. He specialises in issues of migrants and

crime. He collaborates with *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *L'Espresso*, *Wired*, *Vice News*, *Radio Popolare* and *Q Code* magazine. In 2014, he worked for the publishing house *Sperling & Kupfer* on "Lezioni di Mafia" by *Pietro Grasso*.

Attilio Bolzoni – Journalist and author of scientific books, he writes for the newspaper *La Repubblica*. He is a Mafia expert. Born in Sicily, Bolzoni lives in Rome. He worked at *L'Ora di Palermo*, and was a correspondent for *La Repubblica* in the Sicilian capital. He is editor of the blog "Mafie". He is also the author of the documentary *Silencio*. He is a founding member of *Ossigeno per l'Informazione*.

Paolo Borrometi – Sicilian journalist, founder and director of the online newsletter *La Spia*, editor of the *Tv2000* network. Since 2014, the authorities have assigned him under police protection after an assault and repeated threats received due to his publication of exclusive news pieces on Mafia activities in Ragusa and its province and in the Southeast of Sicily. He is president of *Article 21* and the author of a research book that tells the story of a Sicilian Mafia boss, intent on killing him for his inquiries. He has received the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Federico Cafiero De Raho – Since 2017 he is a national Attorney for Antimafia and Anti-terrorism. He was born in Naples and joined the judiciary in 1977. He has conducted numerous judicial investigations into the Camorra and in particular into the Casalesi clan. His name is linked above all to the Spartacus trial which led to the conviction of hundreds of members of the Camorra. From 2006 to March 13th, 2013, he was deputy prosecutor of Naples. In 2013, the CSM plenum nominated him as the Public Prosecutor of the Republic for Reggio Calabria, where he worked until 2017.

Elisabetta Cosci – Publicist, she is the Vice President of the National Order of Journalists. She has collaborated with various radio and television broadcasters (*Radio Flash*, *Radio Popolare*, *CNR*, *RTL*, *Tele Elefante*) and Rai programs, with the newspapers *Il Tirreno*, *La Nazione*, *Il Telegrafo*, *Unità*, *Il Manifesto*, and magazines (*TV Sorrisi and Songs*, *All and New Consumption*). She dealt with current issues and news. Since the 1990s, she is working with press offices, particularly in the arts sector. She currently works as a lecturer in Journalism.

Vito Crimi – Born in Palermo and Senator of the political party "Movimento 5 Stelle". Since June 2018, he is Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers with responsibility for publishing in the government led by Giuseppe Conte. He is a judicial assistant in Brescia and was President of the M5S Senate Parliamentary Group.

Marco Delmastro – Economist, Director of the Economic and Statistical Service of the Authority for Communications Guarantees (*Agcom*). He was the Economic Consultant of the President of the *Agcom* and an economist official of the Antitrust Authority. He was a senior research fellow at the Milan Polytechnic and a research associate at the University of Pavia. Graduated from the University "La Sapienza" of Rome, he received his doctorate in Economics from Warwick (UK). In addition he is the author of numerous national and international scientific publications.

Graziella Di Mambro – Journalist since 1997. She is the editor for legal affairs reporting in the Latina Oggi newspaper. A graduated in Law from La Sapienza University of Rome she has covered investigations and trials on organized crime in Lazio, on corruption and drug trafficking. She received 21 complaints by the same person, a politician who was later convicted of illegal construction and then suspended from office.

Andrea Di Pietro – Criminal lawyer, expert on information law and crimes against the freedom of expression. He is a member of the Media Lawyers Coalition of the Media Legal Defence Initiative (MLDI). He is a legal consultant and coordinator of the Free Legal Aid Office set up by Ossigeno per l'Informazione. He is an author of many publications on the subject of media freedom in Italy and in addition, he teaches journalism.

Roberto Fico – President of the Chamber of Deputies. Born in Naples, he graduated from the University of Trieste in Communication Sciences. He is an elected deputy of the "Movimento 5 Stelle" party for the first time in 2013 and re-elected in 2018. In the previous legislature, he was the president of the Parliamentary Commission for the General Address and the Supervision of the state broadcaster Rai.

Luigi Gaetti – Anatomopathologist. Since 2018, he is Undersecretary of the Interior, with responsibility for Antimafia, of the government headed by Giuseppe Conte. In the XVII legislature, he served as vice-president of the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission. In 2013, he was an elected senator on the list of the "Movimento 5 Stelle" party and served as vice president of the Agriculture Commission.

Pietro Grasso – member of the Italian Senate since 2013, where he served as President from 2013 to 2018. Before turning to politics, he was a magistrate for almost fifty years, serving as prosecutor in Palermo from 1971 to 2005, associate judge in the first mega trial of the Sicilian Mafia in 1986-1987. Lastly, he was Head of the National Antimafia Directorate from 2005 to 2012. He is an honorary member of Ossigeno per l'Informazione.

Marilù Mastrogiovanni – Journalist, writer, founder and editorial director of the online daily "Il Tacco d'Italia". She has been intimidated multiple times because of the investigations she has carried out into the Mafia in Puglia and she is currently under "dynamic vigilance". She is also lecturer on "Investigative journalism online" at the University of Bari. She is one of the jury members of Unesco's Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize and a member of the association of female journalists "G.i.u.Li.a"

Maria Grazia Mazzola – she is a special correspondent for Rai TG1. She worked for Samarcanda, Ballarò, Report, Anno Zero. Followed the massacres of the mafia of the 90s. Published the only TV document on prison isolation for mafiosi (41bis) of stragisti bosses, she reported on Tangentopoli and the mafias. Has received numerous awards. Now she is working on the murders of Daphne Caruana Galicia, Jan Kuciak and Martina Kusnirova. He revealed, with photos that prove it, that Kuciak was spied and stalked. Published international police documents on the lies of the Slovak police chief Gaspar Tibor on the links between the Calabrian drug trafficker Vadalà 'and the Italian 'ndrangheta.

Marcelle Padovani – Freelance French journalist. Correspondent of the weekly "Le Nouvel Observateur", she has lived in Italy since 1974. Politics, trade unions and society are her main topics. She has followed as a reporter the Italian Communist Party and the Italian Socialist Party. In 1991 she co-authored the book "Cose di Cosa Nostra" (Rizzoli) with the magistrate Giovanni Falcone.

Petra Reski – German journalist and writer. Originally from the Ruhr Valley, in 1991 she moved to Venice and currently lives there. She covers Mafia news in Italy. She has raised the issue of Mafia infiltrations in Germany and as a result she has received libels, threats and official censorship. Indeed in 2009 a judicial order partially censored her investigative book "Santa Mafia". In 2018, she released her first novel whose main character is a Sicilian female prosecutor fighting against the Mafia.

Fiorenza Sarzanini – Journalist, editor-in-chief at Corriere della Sera. Former crime news reporter for the daily "Il Messaggero". She has followed the latest major court cases, such as G8 2001 in Genova, trials against Silvio Berlusconi and other inquiries on corruption among politicians. She also deals with security and immigration. She has authored "Amanda e gli altri" (Bompiani) on the shocking murder of an English student in Perugia; "Concordia, la vera storia" (Corriere della Sera Editions) on the Isola del Giglio Costa Concordia disaster.

Marco Tarquinio – Journalist, editorial director of the Catholic daily "Avvenire". He started his journalistic career at "La voce", a local weekly in his native region Umbria. Domestic and foreign affairs are his main subjects. From 1988 to 1990 he worked as a parliamentary reporter for the daily "La Gazzetta", then he moved to "Il tempo" and lastly to "Avvenire".

Nello Trocchia – Freelance TV and press journalist. His investigations delve into the activities of criminal syndicates in Italy and he has recently published a book on the Roman Mafia Casamonica. Trocchia has received several awards for his work.

Giulio Vasaturo – Criminal Defence Lawyer, specialized in media freedom and freedom of expression violations. He holds a PhD in Criminology from the University of Bologna. He is a member of the Regional Technical-Scientific Observatory on Security and Justice in Rome. He has curated several publications on criminology and is a member of the Italian Society of Criminology and Victimology.



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR
**PRESS & MEDIA
FREEDOM**

Menckestraße 27
04155 Leipzig
Germany

phone: +49 (0) 341 200 403 17

fax: +49 (0) 341 562 96 63

email: info@ecpmf.eu

web: www.ecpmf.eu

supported by the



media foundation

of sparkasse leipzig

