

Look for property for sale in Roma >>

Look for agriturismo, villas and B&B in Roma >>

Lazio Provinces

FROSINONE LATINA RIETI ROMA VITERBO

Anti-pizzo Campaigners Hail Drop In Racketeering

Published on the 09-04-2008



Italy is making real progress in its battle against racketeering but it needs to stay on guard and continue fighting, a group of anti-mafia figures gathered in Rome said on Tuesday.

Delegates attending a conference to mark a nationwide week highlighting the issue said police operations and a growing opposition among the general public meant demands for protection money, or 'pizzo', were falling.

"Racketeers are starting to fear they will be reported to the police, because there is no longer a culture of impunity," said

National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor Piero Grasso.

The head of the Sicilian branch of industrial employers federation, Confindustria, which last year decided to expel members caught paying protection money, agreed there had been real progress.

"For years, the police were the only people fighting the Mafia in Sicily, without any support from the rest of society, but things are now starting to change," said Ivanhoe Lo Bello.

"For the first time, associations such as Addiopizzo and Confindustria are actively contributing to the battle".

However, delegates also sounded a note of caution, warning there was still much to be done.

"The outstanding arrests of recent months mean the mafia has been left without leadership but the conditions are ripe for it regrouping," said Grasso. "We are in a period of great hope - this approach is working but we need to continue fighting".

Daniele Marramano of Addiopizzo (Farewell Pizzo), an organization that has battled racketeering for four years, sounded a bleaker note.

"People should be under no illusions: defeating racketeering does not amount to defeating the mafia," he said.

"Furthermore, extortion is not just a problem that concerns businesses in the south - it affects the country's entire economic system".

Mafia protection rackets are rife in southern Italy and particularly Sicily. Figures from the Palermo public prosecutor's office suggest that up to 80% of the city's businesses pay off organized crime.

But would-be racketeers have met with growing resistance in recent years.

National traders association Confcommercio recently announced it would follow in Confindustria's footsteps, expelling those that pay protection money and providing legal assistance to members ready to fight racketeering.

A growing willingness among businesses to resist Mafia pressure has also boosted police operations.

Last month, more than 20 Cosa Nostra pizzo collectors were arrested in a raid. This was believed to be the first time such a large group of racket enforcers have been detained on the word of their victims.

"For some time now we have been seeing signs of deep frustration among businessmen and women who have been subject to racketeering for years," commented two of Italy's leading anti-pizzo campaigners, Tano Grasso of Italy's Anti-Racket Federation and Enrico Colajanni of Addiopizzo.

"We have been able to use this new awareness in order to increase faith in the institutions, building confidence that it is possible to shrug off the yoke of the rackets,"

Responding to a growing interest among shoppers keen to keep their cash out of Mob pockets, Addiopizzo recently opened Palermo's first 'pizzo-free' supermarket.

The store only stocks goods by businesses that have publicly refused to pay protection money.

So far, 30 businesses on the association's 241-strong list are involved in the store.

Yet despite changing attitudes, many victims of rackets still keep quiet, not just through fear of reprisals but also because of interest in doing business with the Mafia.

According to a 2006 report by national retailers association Confesercenti, organized crime extorts 200 million euros a day from Italian businesses through the pizzo, loan sharking and other crimes.

The report said organized crime groups raked in 80 million euros every day from shopkeepers alone.

Add New Comment Login Page Contact






Click for Agriturismo, Villas, B&B
Direct with Owners - Great Choice



Find great agriturismo, villas and B&Bs across Italy

Direct with Owners - Great Choice!

Top Regions

All of Italy - Tuscany -
Abruzzo - Sicily - Puglia -
Sardinia - Marche

Top Cities

Venice - Rome - Florence -
Pisa

Cheap Car Hire in Italy

Visit Italy

[Travel To Italy](#)

[Weather In Italy](#)

[Italian Maps](#)

[Agriturismo, Villas & B&Bs In Italy](#)

[Specialist Holidays In Italy](#)

[Car Rental In Italy](#)

ITALY Topics

[Arts & Culture](#)

[Business](#)

[Crime](#)

[Education](#)

[Environment](#)

[Events](#)

[Food & Drink](#)

[Holidays](#)

[Life & Style](#)

Newsletter Signup

Enter e-mail to receive updates and special offers for Italy

Sign-Up

ITALY Regions

[Abruzzo](#)

[Aosta Valley](#)

[Basilicata](#)

[Calabria](#)

[Campania](#)

[Emilia-Romagna](#)

[Friuli-Venezia Giulia](#)

[Lazio](#)

[Le Marche](#)

[Liguria](#)

[Lombardy](#)

[Molise](#)

[Piedmont](#)

[Puglia](#)