



COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

FIRST SECTION

CASE OF GIAGNONI AND FINOTELLO v. ITALY

(Application no. 31663/96)

JUDGMENT

STRASBOURG

19 December 2002

FINAL

19/03/2003

This judgment will become final in the circumstances set out in Article 44 § 2 of the Convention. It may be subject to editorial revision.

In the case of Giagnoni and Finotello v. Italy,

The European Court of Human Rights (First Section), sitting as a Chamber composed of:

Mr C.L. ROZAKIS, *President*,
Mrs F. TULKENS,
Mr G. BONELLO,
Mr P. LORENZEN,
Mrs N. VAJIĆ,
Mrs S. BOTOCHAROVA, *judges*,
Mr G. RAIMONDI, *ad hoc judge*,

and Mr S. NIELSEN, *Deputy Section Registrar*,

Having deliberated in private on 5 December 2002,

Delivers the following judgment, which was adopted on that date:

PROCEDURE

1. The case originated in an application (no. 31663/96) against the Italian Republic lodged with the European Commission of Human Rights (“the Commission”) under former Article 25 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (“the Convention”) by Mr Marzio Giagnoni and Mrs Monica Finotello (“the applicants”), Italian nationals, on 12 December 1995.

2. The applicants were represented by Mr L. Curradi, a lawyer practising in Florence. The Italian Government (“the Government”) were represented by their Agent, Mr U. Leanza, and by their co-Agent, Mr V. Esposito.

3. The applicants complained under Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 that they had been unable to recover possession of their flat within a reasonable time. Invoking Article 6 § 1 of the Convention, they further complained about the length of the eviction proceedings.

4. The application was transmitted to the Court on 1 November 1998, when Protocol No. 11 to the Convention came into force (Article 5 § 2 of Protocol No. 11).

5. The application was allocated to the Second Section of the Court (Rule 52 § 1 of the Rules of Court). Within that Section, the Chamber that would consider the case (Article 27 § 1 of the Convention) was constituted as provided in Rule 26 § 1 of the Rules of Court. Mr V. Zagrebelsky, the judge elected in respect of Italy, withdrew from sitting in the case (Rule 28). The Government appointed Mr G. Raimondi as *ad hoc* judge to sit in his place (Article 27 § 2 of the Convention and Rule 29 § 2).

6. On 22 March 2001 the Court declared the application admissible.

7. On 1 November 2001 the Court changed the composition of its Sections (Rule 25 § 1). This case was assigned to the newly composed First Section.

THE FACTS

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE

8. The applicants were born in 1952 and 1961 respectively and live in Prato.

9. The applicants are the owners of an apartment in Florence, which they had let to M.P.

10. In a writ served on the tenant on 4 June 1985, the applicants communicated their intention to terminate the lease and summoned the tenant to appear before the Florence Magistrate.

11. By a decision of 24 June 1985, which was made enforceable on 1 July 1985, the Florence Magistrate upheld the validity of the notice to quit and ordered that the premises be vacated by 31 August 1987.

12. On 29 September 1987, the applicants served notice on the tenant requiring him to vacate the premises.

13. On 21 October 1987, they served notice on the tenant informing him that the order for possession would be enforced by a bailiff on 27 November 1987.

14. Between 27 November 1987 and 13 April 1989, the bailiff made four attempts to recover possession.

15. On 29 May 1989, the applicants made a statutory declaration that they urgently required the premises as accommodation for themselves.

16. Between 11 October 1989 and 13 February 1997, the bailiff made nineteen attempts to recover possession. Each attempt proved unsuccessful, as the applicants were never granted the assistance of the police in enforcing the order for possession.

17. On 29 April 1997, the applicants repossessed the premises with the assistance of the police.

II. RELEVANT DOMESTIC LAW

18. The relevant domestic law is described in the Court's judgment in the case of *Immobiliare Saffi v. Italy* [GC], no. 22774/93, §§ 18-35, ECHR 1999-V.

THE LAW

I. ALLEGED VIOLATION OF ARTICLE 1 OF PROTOCOL NO. 1 AND OF ARTICLE 6 § 1 OF THE CONVENTION

19. The applicants complained that they have been unable to recover possession of their flat within a reasonable time owing to the lack of police assistance. They alleged a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention, which provides:

“Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law.

The preceding provisions shall not, however, in any way impair the right of a State to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest or to secure the payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties.”

20. The applicants also alleged a breach of Article 6 § 1 of the Convention, the relevant part of which provides:

“In the determination of his civil rights and obligations ..., everyone is entitled to a ... hearing within a reasonable time by [a] ... tribunal...”

21. The Court has on several previous occasions decided cases raising similar issues as in the present case and found a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 and Article 6 § 1 of the Convention (see *Immobiliare Saffi*, cited above, §§ 46-66; *Lunari v. Italy*, no. 21463/93, 11 January 2001, §§ 34-46; *Palumbo v. Italy*, no. 15919/89, 30 November 2000, §§ 33-47).

22. The Court has examined the present case and finds that there are no facts or arguments from the Government, which would lead to any different conclusion in this case. The Court refers to its detailed reasons in the judgments cited above and notes that in this case the applicants have had to wait for nine years and five months from the first attempt of the bailiff before recovering the flat.

Consequently, there has been a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 and of Article 6 § 1 of the Convention in the present case.

II. APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 41 OF THE CONVENTION

23. Article 41 of the Convention provides:

“If the Court finds that there has been a violation of the Convention or the Protocols thereto, and if the internal law of the High Contracting Party concerned allows only partial reparation to be made, the Court shall, if necessary, afford just satisfaction to the injured party.”

A. Pecuniary damage

24. The applicants sought reparation for the pecuniary damage they had sustained, which they put at 19,495,532 Italian Lire (ITL) [10,068.60 euros (EUR)], ITL 13,418,532 [EUR 6,930.09] being the difference of the rent they paid for a new flat and the rent paid by their tenant from 1st November 1994 to 29 April 1997 (when the applicants recovered possession), ITL 6,077,000 [EUR 3,138.51] being the costs they sustained for executing the possession order. They produced a fee note.

25. The Government stressed that the applicants had failed to adduce evidence of any pecuniary damage sustained as a result of the alleged violation. As regards the costs incurred in the domestic proceedings, the Government argued that the costs of the proceedings on the merits were not related to the alleged violations and that the costs incurred during the enforcement stage were due only for the period that was regarded as being a disproportionate interference with the applicants' right of property.

26. The Court considers that the applicants must be awarded compensation for the pecuniary damage for loss of rent (see *Immobiliare Saffi*, cited above, § 79). Having regard to the means of calculation proposed by the applicants, the Court decides to grant the sum claimed of EUR 6,930 and to award each applicant EUR 3,465 under this head.

As regards the costs of the enforcement proceedings, the Court considers that they must be reimbursed in part (see the *Scollo v. Italy* judgment of 28 September 1995, Series A no. 315-C, p. 56, § 50). It considers, however, that only the costs relating to the delay in the eviction must be reimbursed and, accordingly, decides to grant the sum of EUR 2,000 and, therefore, to award each applicant the amount of EUR 1,000 under this head.

B. Non-pecuniary damage

27. The applicants left the matter to be assessed by the Court in an equitable manner.

28. The Government stressed that the applicants had failed to adduce evidence of non-pecuniary damage sustained.

29. The Court considers that the applicants must have sustained some non-pecuniary damage. Therefore, the Court decides, on an equitable basis, to award each applicant EUR 9,000 under this head.

C. Costs and expenses

30. The applicants sought reimbursement for their costs and expenses before the Court, which they put at ITL 16,703,000 [EUR 8,626.38].

31. According to the Court's case-law, an award can be made in respect of costs and expenses only in so far as they have been actually and necessarily incurred by the applicants and are reasonable as to quantum. In the present case, on the basis of the information in its possession and the above-mentioned criteria, the Court considers that EUR 2,000 is a reasonable sum and awards each applicant the sum of EUR 1,000.

D. Default interest

32. The Court considers it appropriate that the default interest should be based on the marginal lending rate of the European Central Bank to which should be added three percentage points.

FOR THESE REASONS, THE COURT UNANIMOUSLY

1. *Holds* that there has been a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention;
2. *Holds* that there has been a violation of Article 6 § 1 of the Convention;
3. *Holds*
 - (a) that the respondent State is to pay each of the applicants, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final according to Article 44 § 2 of the Convention, the following amounts:
 - (i) 4,465 EUR (four thousand four hundred sixty-five euros) for pecuniary damage;
 - (ii) 9,000 EUR (nine thousand euros) for non-pecuniary damage;
 - (iii) 1,000 EUR (one thousand euros) for legal costs and expenses;
 - (b) that from the expiry of the above-mentioned three months until settlement simple interest shall be payable on the above amounts at a rate equal to the marginal lending rate of the European Central Bank during the default period plus three percentage points;
4. *Dismisses* the remainder of the applicants' claim for just satisfaction.

Done in English, and notified in writing on 19 December 2002, pursuant to Rule 77 §§ 2 and 3 of the Rules of Court.

Søren NIELSEN
Deputy Registrar

Christos ROZAKIS
President