



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

FIRST SECTION

CASE OF M.P. v. ITALY

(Application no. 31923/96)

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 M.P. 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. 31923/96) 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 an Italian national, Mr M.P. (“the applicant”), on 17 April 1996. The President of the Chamber acceded to the applicant's request not to have her name disclosed (Rule 47 § 3 of the Rules of Court).

2. Before the Court the applicant was represented by Mr N. Pollastri, 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 applicant complained under Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 that she had been unable to recover possession of her flat within a reasonable time. Invoking Article 6 § 1 of the Convention, she 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 25 May 2000 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 applicant was born in 1925 and lives in Florence.

9. The applicant is the owner of an apartment in Florence, which she had let to S.G.

10. In a registered letter of 26 March 1983, the applicant informed the tenant that she intended to terminate the lease on expiry of the term on 31 December 1983 and asked him to vacate the premises by that date.

11. In a writ served on the tenant on 12 June 1985 the applicant reiterated her intention to terminate the lease and summoned the tenant to appear before the Florence Magistrate.

12. On 27 December 1985, the Florence Magistrate upheld the validity of the notice to quit and ordered that the premises be vacated by 28 December 1986. That decision was made enforceable on 7 April 1987.

13. On 16 April 1987, the applicant served notice on the tenant requiring him to vacate the premises.

14. On 20 May 1987, she served notice on the tenant informing him that the order for possession would be enforced by a bailiff on 29 June 1987.

15. Between 29 June 1987 and 17 September 1992, the bailiff made fourteen attempts to recover possession.

16. Each attempt proved unsuccessful, as, under the statutory provisions providing for the suspension or the staggering of evictions, the applicant was not entitled to police assistance in enforcing the order for possession.

17. On 28 September 1992, the applicant made a statutory declaration that she urgently required the premises in order to sell them at a normal market price.

18. Between 20 January 1993 and 16 September 1998, the bailiff made thirteen attempts to recover possession.

19. Each attempt proved unsuccessful, as the applicant was never granted the assistance of the police in enforcing the order for possession.

20. Following the entry into force of Law No. 431/98, the enforcement proceedings were suspended until 28 June 1999.

21. On 29 March 2002, the Florence Magistrate ordered that the premises be vacated by 4 December 2003.

II. RELEVANT DOMESTIC LAW

22. 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

23. The applicant complained that she had been unable to recover possession of her flat within a reasonable time owing to the lack of police assistance. She 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.”

24. The applicant 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...”

25. 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).

26. 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 applicant has been waiting for approximately fifteen years and five months after the first attempt of the bailiff to repossess the flat.

27. 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

28. 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

29. The applicant sought reparation for the pecuniary damage she had sustained, which she put at 66,864,000 Italian lire (ITL) [34,532.37 euros (EUR)], being the loss of rent for the period from January 1993, under the legislation relaxing restrictions on rent levels, to December 1999 and 5,070,018 ITL [2,618.45 EUR] for the costs of executing the possession order.

30. The Government argued that the costs of the proceedings on the merits were not related to the alleged violations.

31. The Court considers that the applicant must be awarded compensation for the pecuniary damage resulting from the loss of rent (see *Immobiliare Saffi* cited above, § 79). Having regard to the means of calculation proposed by the applicant, the Court, in the light of the evidence before it and the period concerned, decides to award the amount in full EUR 34,532.37. 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 decides to award the requested amount of EUR 2,000.

The Court awards a total sum of EUR 36, 532.37 for pecuniary damage.

B. Costs and expenses

32. The applicant sought reimbursement of her legal costs, which she put at ITL 8,000,000 [4,131.66 EUR] for her costs and expenses before the Commission and the Court.

33. 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 applicant and are reasonable as to quantum (*Bottazzi v. Italy*, no. 34884/97, Reports of Judgments and Decisions 1999-V, § 30). 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 the applicant that amount.

C. Default interest

34. 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 the applicant, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final according to Article 44 § 2 of the Convention, the following amounts:
 - (i) 36,532.37 EUR (thirty six thousand five hundred thirty two euros thirty seven cents) for pecuniary damage;
 - (ii) 2,000 EUR (two thousand five hundred 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 applicant's 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