



## Announcement of a Grand Chamber case concerning the search of a Masonic association's premises

The European Court of Human Rights will deliver its ruling in the case of **Grande Oriente d'Italia v. Italy** (application no. 29550/17) at a public hearing on 7 July 2026 at 3 p.m. in the Human Rights Building, Strasbourg.

The case concerns the search – ordered by a parliamentary commission of inquiry in the context of a parliamentary inquiry into mafia-type organised crime – of the applicant association's premises, and the subsequent seizure of numerous paper and digital documents, in particular lists containing the names and personal data of more than 6,000 members of the applicant association.

### Principal facts and complaints

The applicant, Grande Oriente d'Italia, is a Masonic association founded in 1805 which groups together several lodges.

In 2013 a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the phenomenon of mafias and other criminal associations, including foreign ones (*Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno delle mafie e sulle altre associazioni criminali anche straniere*) was set up. It was mandated, among other things, to conduct an inquiry into the risk of Mafia infiltration into Masonic associations, on account of revelations emerging from various criminal proceedings.

On several occasions in 2016, the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry asked the Grand Master of the applicant association to provide a list of its lodges' members. He refused each time, on the grounds that the data were confidential and that, in his view, the request was vague and unreasoned, in that it referred neither to ongoing investigations, nor to any specific crimes allegedly committed by members of the association. The Grand Master again refused to disclose the names when summoned as a witness in January 2017.

In March 2017 the Parliamentary Commission ordered a search of the applicant association's premises. The purpose of this measure was to obtain a list of anyone who belonged or had belonged to a Grande Oriente d'Italia Masonic lodge in Calabria or Sicily from 1990 onwards, with their rank and role, as well as information about all the lodges in Calabria and Sicily which had been dissolved or suspended from 1990 onwards, including the names and personal files of all their members, and, lastly, any investigations carried out and decisions taken.

The applicant association's premises, including its archives, library, and the Grand Master's personal residence were searched, as were the contents of several computers. This resulted in the seizure of numerous paper and digital documents, including lists of approximately 6,000 persons registered with the applicant association, as well as hard drives, USB sticks and computers. According to the authorities, the material was carefully selected so as to exclude documents and information not included in the scope of the search.

The applicant association unsuccessfully challenged the search order and subsequent seizures. The Parliamentary Commission, asked to reconsider the search order under its own procedural rules, declined to make a ruling. The National Data Protection Authority stated that it had no jurisdiction in matters of parliamentary activity. Meanwhile the prosecuting authorities dismissed an application for the matter to be referred to the Constitutional Court for judicial review; they also discontinued an investigation opened following a criminal complaint lodged by the applicant association, on the

grounds, in particular, that the ordinary courts lacked jurisdiction over the acts of a parliamentary commission of inquiry.

## Complaints

The applicant association submitted that the search of its premises and the seizures had not been “in accordance with the law” within the meaning of Article 8 (right to respect for private life) of the European Convention on Human Rights and that they had been grossly disproportionate – arguing that the contested measures had not been based on relevant or sufficient reasons –, extremely broad in scope, and had lacked sufficient procedural safeguards against abuse and arbitrariness. It also relied on Articles 11 (freedom of assembly and association) and 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the Convention.

## Procedure

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 13 April 2017.

In a [judgment](#) of 19 December 2024, a Chamber of the Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention. The Chamber also held, by 6 votes to 1, that there was no need to examine the applicant association’s complaints under Articles 11 and 13.

On 19 March 2025 the Government requested that the case be referred to the Grand Chamber under Article 43 of the Convention (referral to the Grand Chamber) and on 28 April 2025 a panel of the Grand Chamber [accepted](#) that request.

A hearing took place on 19 November 2025.

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