



## Grand Chamber hearing on coercive measures ordered in the context of a parliamentary inquiry into mafia-type organised crime

The European Court of Human Rights is holding a **Grand Chamber**<sup>1</sup> hearing today **Wednesday 19 November 2025** at **9.15 a.m.** in the case of **Grande Oriente d'Italia v. Italy** (application no. 29550/17).

The case concerns the search of a Masonic association's premises ordered in the context of a parliamentary inquiry into mafia-type organised crime. Paper and digital documents, in particular lists containing the names and personal data of approximately 6,000 members of the association, were seized during the search.

*After the hearing the Court will begin its deliberations, which will be held in private. Its ruling in the case will, however, be made at a later stage. A recording of the hearing will be available this afternoon on the Court's internet site ([www.echr.coe.int](http://www.echr.coe.int)).*

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 relations between the Mafia and Freemasonry, 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 flash drives and computers.

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. Meanwhile the prosecuting authorities dismissed an application for the

<sup>1</sup> Under Article 43 of the European Convention on Human Rights, within three months from the date of a Chamber judgment, any party to the case may, in exceptional cases, request that the case be referred to the 17-judges Grand Chamber of the Court.

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.

## Procedure

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

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

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 28 April 2025 the case was [referred](#) to the Grand Chamber at the Italian Government’s request.

The European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission) was invited to intervene in the written proceedings as a third party.

## Composition of the Court

The case will be heard by a Grand Chamber, composed as follows:

Mattias **Guyomar** (France), *President*,  
Arnfinn **Bårdsen** (Norway),  
Lado **Chanturia** (Georgia),  
Ioannis **Ktistakis** (Greece),  
Kateřina **Šimáčková** (the Czech Republic),  
Raffaele **Sabato** (Italy),  
Lorraine **Schembri Orland** (Malta),  
Anja **Seibert-Fohr** (Germany),  
Peeter **Roosma** (Estonia),  
Ana Maria **Guerra Martins** (Portugal),  
Diana **Sârcu** (the Republic of Moldova),  
Diana **Kovatcheva** (Bulgaria),  
Stéphane **Pisani** (Luxembourg),  
Mateja **Đurović** (Serbia),  
András **Jakab** (Austria),  
Juha **Lavapuro** (Finland),  
Vahe **Grigoryan** (Armenia), *judges*,  
Péter **Paczolay** (Hungary),  
Saadet **Yüksel** (Türkiye),  
Canòlic **Mingorance Cairat** (Andorra), *substitute judges*,

and also John **Darcy**, *Deputy Grand Chamber Registrar*.

## Representatives of the parties

### Government

Lorenzo D'Ascia, *Agent, Avvocato dello Stato*,

Emanuele Manzo and Monica De Vergori, *Avvocati dello Stato, Counsel*;

### Applicant

Vincenzo Zeno-Zencovich, *Counsel*.

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**The European Court of Human Rights** was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.