CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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

SECOND SECTION

DECISION

AS TO THE ADMISSIBILITY OF

Application no. 39716/98
by Luciana STOPPINI
against Italy

The European Court of Human Rights (Second Section), sitting on 13 September 2001 as a Chamber composed of

Mr C.L. ROZAKIS, *President*,
Mr L. FERRARI BRAVO,
Mr G. BONELLO,
Mrs V. STRÁŽNICKÁ,
Mr M. FISCHBACH,
Mrs M. TSATSA-NIKOLOVSKA,
Mr E. LEVITS, *judges*,

and Mr E. FRIBERGH, *Section Registrar*,

Having regard to the above application introduced with the European Commission of Human Rights on 2 July 1996 and registered on 6 February 1998,

Having regard to Article 5 § 2 of Protocol No. 11 to the Convention, by which the competence to examine the application was transferred to the Court,

Having regard to the observations submitted by the respondent Government and the observations in reply submitted by the applicant,

Having deliberated, decides as follows:

THE FACTS

The applicant is an Italian national, born in 1946 and living in Florence. She is represented before the Court by Mrs M. Falatti, a lawyer practising in Florence.

The facts of the case, as submitted by the parties, may be summarised as follows:

The applicant is the owner of an apartment in Florence, which she had let to L.M.

In a writ served on the tenant on 5 November 1986, the applicant summoned the tenant to appear before the Florence Magistrate.

By a decision of 12 January 1987, which was made enforceable on 22 January 1987, the Florence Magistrate upheld the validity of the notice to quit and ordered that the premises be vacated by 12 January 1988.

On 11 April 1989, the applicant made a statutory declaration that she urgently required the premises as accommodation for herself.

On 23 May 1989, the applicant served notice on the tenant requiring him to vacate the premises.

On 20 June 1989 she served notice on the tenant informing him that the order for possession would be enforced by a bailiff on 13 July 1989.

Between 13 July 1989 and 10 January 1996 the bailiff made 19 attempts to recover possession.

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

On 9 February 1996 the applicant recovered possession of her apartment.

THE LAW

The applicant complains under Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention that her inability to recover possession of her apartment amounted to a violation of the right to property.

The applicant further complains under Article 6 of the Convention about the duration of the eviction proceedings.

The Government argue that the applicant has not exhausted domestic remedies on the grounds that she failed to challenge the refusal of police assistance before the administrative courts.

The applicant contests the Government’s arguments arguing that the prefectoral committee never adopted a formal decision refusing police assistance.

The Court recalls that it has already dismissed this objection in the Immobiliare Saffi case (see the judgment *Immobiliare Saffi v. Italy* [GC], no. 22774/93, §§ 40-42, ECHR 1999-V). The Court sees no reason to depart from its previous finding. This objection should therefore be rejected.

The Government argue that the arrangements for staggering the police assistance were an administrative issue, entirely separate from and independent of the judicial process and therefore outside the scope of Article 6.

The Court recalls that it has already held that Article 6 of the Convention is applicable to the tenants eviction proceedings (see the *Immobiliare Saffi* judgment cited above, §§ 62-63). The Court sees no reason to depart from its previous finding. This objection should therefore be rejected.

The Government maintain that the interference with the applicant's property rights was not disproportionate.

As to the length of the enforcement proceedings, the Government maintain that the delay in providing the assistance of the police is justified by the protection of the public interest.

The applicant argues that the refusal of the administration to enforce the order issued by the magistrate has interfered with the power of the judiciary.

The Court considers that the application raises complex and serious issues which require a determination on the merits. It follows that it cannot be considered manifestly ill-founded within the meaning of Article 35 § 3 of the Convention. No other ground for declaring the application inadmissible has been established.

For these reasons, the Court unanimously

Declares the application admissible, without prejudging the merits of the case.

Erik FRIBERGH
Registrar

Christos ROZAKIS
President