



### E90 Killing Methods in Sicilian Mafia Families

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand various principles of Mafia murders, especially regarding the characteristics of both injuries and of weapons used.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by contributing to the primary objective of legal medicine, by clarifying the method of murder, and verifying the reliability of police informants.

The recent conclusion of the operation “M. N.” that dealt a heavy blow to the Mafia clans in the Sicilian province allows representation of the activity conducted as part of the judicial forensic process.

In the late 1980s in the area of Nebrodi, a mountain range located in the Tyrrhenian coast of the province of Messina, Sicily, a Mafia war saw dozens of murders, disappearances of the bosses, drug dealers, and brutal executions in a style similar to what happened during those same years in Central America. The fighting of Barcellonesi gangs against the Tortoricane gangs, families against families, occurred in order to manage the drug market and the market of landfills and waste, as well as to obtain contractors and subcontractors of a new railway line.

This study examined 41 cadavers autopsied between 1987 and 1992. Some of the bodies were found at the murder scene and others far from the site of the crime, in an area that is difficult to access. Nine bodies were found inside their own cars (two of which were burned) and the others were in public places (abandoned farm houses, agricultural land, streets, and public areas). The condition of the bodies varied in relation to the date and the manner of the murder: there were 33 “fresh” bodies, 3 burned bodies, 3 skeletonized bodies, and 2 putrefied bodies. All were Caucasian (with the exception of a Moroccan); there were 40 males and 1 woman. All were between 17 and 60 years of age. The bodies were mostly members of the “cosche mafiose” and only rarely were they unwitting victims. There was one mutilated victim. Some of the bodies were found after a period of more than two years from the official notification to the police regarding the missing person and were discovered thanks to the help and collaboration of “repented” Mafia members. In these cases, anthropometric analyses were necessary. Crime scene investigations were therefore required and conducted by medicolegal experts cooperating with police officers.

Ballistic experts examined the weapons, bullets, and cartridges found at the crime scenes and with the bodies of the victims. Firearms were used in all the murders; in some cases, a modified shortened rifle with sawed off barrels (called the “lupara”) was used that has a high lacerating power at short distances. The head shot lesions produced by firearms were mostly localized in the occipital region, typical of “executions,” while, in the remaining cases, there were primarily multiple lesions distributed over the chest, abdomen, and limbs.

In conclusion, the forensic analysis depicted the “modus operandi” of Mafia clans of the 1980s and 1990s.

### Sicilian Mafia, Criminal Organization, Forensic Investigation