



### E70 Gargano Mafia: The Fifth Italian Mafia With an Analysis of 129 Murders

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**Learning Overview:** The goal of this presentation is to examine the fifth Italian mafia, the “Mafia of Gargano,” the youngest of the famous criminal organizations in Italy, its homicidal mode, type of weapons used in murders, and the typology of action.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting the distinctive features of a criminal association in Puglia through the analysis of several murders committed there.

Four principal criminal organizations are known to exist in Italy: “Cosa Nostra” in Sicily, “Camorra” in Campania, “Sacra Corona Unita” (SCU, United Holy Crown) in Puglia, and “Ndrangheta” in Calabria. It is also well known to the Italian authorities that there are several subsidiary independent criminal groups that modeled their organizations after the Mafia. In the Apulian Region the SCU developed: The “Foggia Society” and the “Garganic Mafia.” The Mafia’s historians traced back the origins of “Foggia Society” to January 1979, when the main criminal leader of the area was in a meeting at the Hotel Florio, on the road from Foggia to San Severo. The Godfather of the occasion was Raffaele Cutolo, Neapolitan Mafioso of the “New Organized Camorra.” The Godfather arrived in Foggia and explained the dynamics of organized crime and affiliated the local gangsters. He also explained the Mafia method and created the “Foggia Society.” The “Mafia of Gargano” began their criminal activities in the 1990s with a series of violent murders committed between 1990 and 2002.

This group was initially classified by both the district attorney and local authorities as a group of “familial thugs” of rural origin, but it is now known as a large, notorious organization, recognized in 2009 as a “mafia-like criminal association.” In the last decade, the “Mafia of Gargano” established its power and control in both national and international laundering, human smuggling, illegal distribution of drugs and tobacco, and trafficking in weapons from the east countries by way of the Balkans. Some “Mafia of Gargano” murders are intended to portray the power of a group and its ability to control a territory. On the other hand, murders have the goal of eliminating individuals that may represent an obstacle to the criminal organization’s business. This statistical study analyzed 129 cases of homicides committed by firearms between 2000 and 2015 in the Foggia countryside. In all, 69 incidents occurred in the “Gargano area,” all planned to follow the pattern of attack, and the other 60 incidents happened in suburban areas and around Foggia. These murders were categorized in regard to the type of weaponry and homicidal modality, with particular care taken of the description and classification of the target body regions.

Subsequently, the type of weapon used for the various murders was taken into consideration; this is another significant variable characterizing the classic *modus operandi* of the Gargano Mafia. In 42 out of 69 homicides, the weapon typically used is the rifle, while in the remaining 26 homicides, the weapon used is handgun, whereas in the murders in the Foggia area, the weapon typically used is a handgun, characterizing as many as 47 homicides out of 60. In the Gargano Mafia murders, it is possible to underline that 26 murders exhibited the presence of the *coup de grace*, but all followed the pattern of an ambush. The complete analysis of these homicides sheds some light on a specific “way to kill” that binds and defines the “Gargano Mafia murders, establishing the existence of a canonical procedure of preparation and execution of the criminal events with the primary intent of avoiding an open casket funeral. Predominant is the will to express the strength of the group and its affiliates, the total disregard of rules among members, the recourse to deception to lure the victim, and the involvement of innocent unrelated people—all elements that characterize the “Mafia of Gargano.”

#### Italian Mafia, Criminal Organization, Mafia Murder