



A SEISMOLOGISTS' POINT OF VIEW ON THE L'AQUILA TRIAL

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In October 2012, the court of L'Aquila (Italy) sentenced seven experts to six years of jail and ordered them to pay several million Euros in damages to the families of some of the people killed by the L'Aquila earthquake.

We describe some of the issues related to the conviction of the seven experts, who participated in various ways to a meeting six days before the April 6, 2009 L'Aquila earthquake. The meeting was convened by the Head of the national Civil Protection and was then identified as the "Commissioni Grandi Rischi" meeting.

Here we focus mainly on the scientific issues that were broadly debated in the trial, and on how the supposed reassurance message could have reached some of the victims. We describe the weird and distorted way in which the scientific data and results, characterized for their nature by large uncertainties, were treated in the trial, and how, according to the judge, these should have been used as a predictive tool. Moreover, we point out how the information was conveyed by media during the seismic swarm that preceded the main shock, and in particular between the March 31 meeting and the April 6 destructive earthquake. We believe that the "reassuring" messages, if any, were not generated during the meeting itself. Moreover, neither in the official reports of INGV nor in declarations of its scientists any reassuring message was never released.

The verdict has had a tremendous impact on the scientific community as well as on the manner scientists deliver their expert opinions to decision makers and the society. The aim of this presentation is to give an update on the events related to the trial, that occurred in the past year:

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Several workshop and seminars were organized in Italy and abroad to discuss about the trial and to study similar cases, also related to other scientific fields.

The Department of Civil Protection (DCP) financed a research project on short term earthquake precursors.

The prosecutor impeached the former DCP-chief (Bertolaso) claiming that he had been the instigator of a (so-called) 'media operation' with the intention of reassuring the population. After hearing the witnesses the same prosecutor recently requested a dismissal of Bertolaso. The “Procura generale” will soon decide about it.

Two “Commissioni Grandi Rischi” meetings were held at the beginning of 2014 to discuss about seismic sequences going on in Italy in 2013-2014.

Waiting for the beginning of the Court of Appeals we are trying to find any possible way to support our colleagues. Documents, articles and comments about the trial were collected and are available at <http://processoaquila.wordpress.com/>.