

Prosecutor Warns of a Mafia Threat Against Pope Francis

Pope Francis could be at risk from the 'Ndrangheta organized crime organization, according to a leading anti-mob prosecutor who has himself been the target of threats from the Mafia.

Nicola Gratteri, 55, a state prosecutor in the southern Italian region of Calabria, where the 'Ndrangheta is most active, said the pope's effort to reform the church is making the 'Ndrangheta "very nervous."

The organization is considered by experts in Italy to be the most dangerous, most unified and most difficult to penetrate mafia-type organization in the country.

"I cannot say if the organization is in a position to do something like this, but they are dangerous and it is worth reflecting on," Gratteri warned. "If the **godfathers** can find a way to stop him, they will seriously consider it.

"Those who have up until now profited from the influence and wealth drawn from the church are getting very nervous," he added. "For many years, the Mafia has laundered money and made investments with the complicity of the **church**. But now the **pope** is dismantling the poles of economic power in the Vatican, and that is dangerous."

Gratteri noted that in southern Italy organized crime figures have strong and high-profile relationships with local church leaders, who help give the crime figures legitimacy.

He also said most Italian mobsters are practicing Catholics, despite their violent activities.

"A gunman from the 'Ndrangheta will pray and kiss his rosary before shooting someone," said Gratteri, who has been under

police protection against the mob since the 1980s.

Gratteri was named by Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta to head a special committee aimed at curbing the influence of organized crime.

Francis has spoken out strongly against organized crime in the past, specifically naming the country's four main organized crime groups—including the 'Ndrangheta—in May.

On Monday, Francis spoke out against corruption, quoting Jesus from the Gospel of St. Luke: "It would be better for [the corrupt man] if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea."

Security issues have been an area of concern since the early days of Francis' papacy because of his willingness to break protocol to engage with the faithful.