

Stealing food is not a crime, says Italian court

7th May, 2016



An Italian court has ruled that food theft brought about by hunger is not illegal. Italy's highest court of appeal, the Supreme Court of Cassation, threw out the conviction of a

homeless Ukrainian man, Roman Ostriakov, who was sentenced to six months in jail for stealing cheese and a sausage worth \$4.50. Mr Ostriakov was also fined \$115 by the trial court. His lawyers initially appealed for a reduction in that fine and were surprised when the whole conviction was quashed. The court said Mr Ostriakov taking the food, "does not constitute a crime" because he stole a small amount of food out of desperation. The court of appeal ruled that stealing small amounts of food to stave off hunger is not a crime.

Many people hope Mr Ostriakov's case will highlight the extent of poverty and homelessness in Italy. They also believe the ruling will mean other hungry people who are arrested for shoplifting will not be convicted. Criminal lawyer Maurizio Bellacosa said the Ostriakov case, "is a new principle, and it might lead to a more frequent application of the state of necessity linked to poverty situations". The court ruled in a statement that: "People should not be punished if, forced by need, they steal small quantities of food in order to meet the basic requirement of feeding themselves." Italy's La Stampa newspaper said: "The court's decision reminds us all that in a civilised country, no one should be allowed to die of hunger."

Sources: *Christain Science Monitor* / *bbc* / *theLocal.it*

Writing

A government's job is to make sure none of its people is hungry. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

court / hunger / illegal / homeless / cheese / trial / crime / desperation / highlight / shoplifting / lawyer / poverty / requirement / decision / civilized

True / False

- The court in the article is Italy's highest court of appeal. T / F
- The man who stole the food was from Milan. T / F
- The man was given a \$1,000 fine. T / F
- The court said it wasn't a crime because it was a small amount. T / F
- People hope the case will put a focus on homelessness in Italy. T / F
- A judge said no one would be arrested for stealing food. T / F
- A lawyer suggested more people might be let off for stealing food. T / F
- An Italian newspaper disagreed with the court's decision. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. ruled | a. degree |
| 2. threw out | b. amount to |
| 3. jail | c. quantity |
| 4. constitute | d. decreed |
| 5. desperation | e. simple |
| 6. extent | f. rule |
| 7. case | g. prison |
| 8. principle | h. rejected |
| 9. amounts | i. legal action |
| 10. basic | j. hopeless |

Discussion – Student A

- Would food stores go bankrupt if stealing for food was not a crime?
- If stealing for food is not a crime, how about stealing clothes?
- What can countries do to make sure no one is hungry?
- What's the hungriest you've ever been?
- What would you do if you had no food or money?
- Should uneaten food in supermarkets and restaurants go to the poor?
- How civilised a country is your country?
- What questions would you like to ask the judge?

Breaking News English - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

- Italy's highest
- sentenced to
- His lawyers initially
- out of
- stave off
- highlight the extent
- arrested for
- People should not be
- in order to meet the basic
- in a civilised
- requirement
- desperation
- of poverty
- court of appeal
- shoplifting
- six months in jail
- country
- hunger
- punished
- appealed

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Do you think Mr Ostriakov is a thief?
- Is the government responsible for feeding people who are starving?
- Would you steal food if you had none?
- What would you rule if you were the judge?
- Will this case lead to more shoplifting?
- Was this case worth the money spent on paying lawyers and judges?
- Is stealing food a crime?

Spelling

- Italy's highest court of elpaap
- a creoiutdn in that fine
- the whole tiiovcvconn was quashed
- does not uttecnoits a crime
- out of sidrtnopeae
- small onamstu of food
- the extent of vepryot and homelessness
- drtsraee for shoplifting
- a more uenqefrt application
- People should not be siednpuh
- the basic rtreqneuemi of feeding themselves
- in a svileiicd (UK) / dcveizlij (USA) country

Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. h	3. g	4. b	5. j
6. a	7. i	8. f	9. c	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Food when hungry

You think stealing food when hungry is the worst kind of theft. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are not so wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the most understandable of these (and why): using a neighbour's wi-fi, taking flowers from a garden or not buying a train ticket.

Role B – A neighbour's wi-fi

You think using a neighbour's wi-fi is the worst kind of theft. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are not so wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the most understandable of these (and why): stealing food when hungry, taking flowers from a garden or not buying a train ticket.

Role C – Flowers from a garden

You think taking flowers from a garden is the worst kind of theft. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are not so wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the most understandable of these (and why): using a neighbour's wi-fi, stealing food when hungry or not buying a train ticket.

Role D – Not buying a train ticket

You think not buying a train ticket is the worst kind of theft. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are not so wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the most understandable of these (and why): using a neighbour's wi-fi, taking flowers from a garden or stealing food when hungry.

Speaking – Theft

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst instances of stealing at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- food when hungry
- clothes when cold
- neighbour's wi-fi
- medicine when ill
- illegal movie downloads
- flowers from a garden
- not buying a bus ticket
- eating chips in a shop

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.