[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) A **mafia** is a type of [organized crime](/wiki/Organized_crime) syndicate whose primary activities are [protection racketeering](/wiki/Protection_racket), the arbitration of disputes between criminals, and the organizing and oversight of illegal agreements and transactions.<ref name=Gambetta2009>[Template:Harvnb](/wiki/Template:Harvnb)</ref> Secondary activities may be practiced such as [gambling](/wiki/Gambling), [loan sharking](/wiki/Loan_shark), [drug-trafficking](/wiki/Illegal_drug_trade), and [fraud](/wiki/Fraud).

The term was originally applied to the [Sicilian Mafia](/wiki/Sicilian_Mafia), but has since expanded to encompass other organizations of similar methods and purpose, e.g., "the Russian Mafia" or "the Japanese Mafia". The term is applied informally by the press and public; the criminal organizations themselves have their own terms (e.g. the Sicilian Mafia calls itself "Cosa Nostra" and the Japanese Mafia calls itself "[yakuza](/wiki/Yakuza)"). When used alone and without any qualifier, "Mafia" or "the Mafia" typically refers to either the Sicilian Mafia or the [Italian-American Mafia](/wiki/American_Mafia), and sometimes [Italian organized crime](/wiki/Organized_crime_in_Italy#Italian_crime_in_U.S._and_other_foreign_countries) in general.

## Contents

* 1 Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]
* 2 Definitions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]
  + 2.1 Mafias as private protection firms[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]
  + 2.2 Mafia-type organizations under Italian law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]
* 3 International[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]
  + 3.1 Italy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]
  + 3.2 Other countries[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]
* 4 References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]
  + 4.1 Sources[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The word *mafia* originated in Sicily. The Sicilian adjective *mafiusu*, roughly translated, means 'swagger', but can also be translated as 'boldness' or [bravado'](/wiki/Wikt:bravado). In reference to a man, *mafiusu* in 19th century Sicily was ambiguous, signifying a bully, arrogant but also fearless, enterprising, and proud, according to scholar [Diego Gambetta](/wiki/Diego_Gambetta).[[1]](#cite_note-1) In reference to a woman, however, the feminine-form adjective *mafiusa* means 'beautiful' or 'attractive'.

Because Sicily was once an [Islamic emirate](/wiki/Emirate_of_Sicily), *mafia* may have come to Sicilian through [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic), though the word's origins are uncertain. Possible Arabic roots of the word include:

* *mahyas* (مهياص) = aggressive boasting, bragging
* *marfud* (مرفوض) = rejected
* *mu'afa* = safety, protection<ref name=GambettaSicilianMafia259-261>Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia*. pp. 259-261.</ref>
* *Ma àfir* = the name of an Arab tribe[[2]](#cite_note-2) that ruled [Palermo](/wiki/Palermo).[[3]](#cite_note-3) The local peasants imitated these Arabs and as a result the tribes name entered the popular lexicon. The word *mafia* was then used to refer to the defenders of Palermo during the [Sicilian Vespers](/wiki/Sicilian_Vespers).[[4]](#cite_note-4)The public's association of the word with the criminal secret society was perhaps inspired by the 1863 play *"I mafiusi di la Vicaria"* ("The Mafiosi of the Vicaria") by Giuseppe Rizzotto and Gaspare Mosca. The words *Mafia* and *mafiusi* are never mentioned in the play; they were probably put in the title to add a local flair. The play is about a [Palermo](/wiki/Palermo) prison gang with traits similar to the Mafia: a boss, an initiation ritual, and talk of *"umirtà"* ([omertà](/wiki/Omertà) or code of silence) and *"*[*pizzu*](/wiki/Pizzo_(extortion))*"* (a codeword for extortion money).[[5]](#cite_note-5) The play had great success throughout Italy. Soon after, the use of the term *mafia* began appearing in the Italian state's early reports on the phenomenon. The word made its first official appearance in 1865 in a report by the prefect of [Palermo](/wiki/Palermo), [Filippo Antonio Gualterio](/wiki/Filippo_Antonio_Gualterio_(senator)).<ref name=lupo3>Lupo, [*The History of the Mafia*](http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-13134-6/history-of-the-mafia/excerpt), p. 3.</ref>

## Definitions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

A formal definition of "mafia" can be hard to come by. The term was never officially used by Sicilian mafiosi, who prefer to refer to their organization as "[Cosa Nostra](/wiki/Sicilian_Mafia)". Nevertheless, it is typically by comparison to the Sicilian Mafia that other criminal groups earn the label. The expansion of the term has not been welcomed by all scholars. [Giovanni Falcone](/wiki/Giovanni_Falcone), an anti-Mafia judge murdered by the Sicilian Mafia in 1992, objected to the conflation of the term "Mafia" with organized crime in general: [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

### Mafias as private protection firms[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

Scholars such as [Diego Gambetta](/wiki/Diego_Gambetta)[[6]](#cite_note-6) and [Leopoldo Franchetti](/wiki/Leopoldo_Franchetti) have characterized the Sicilian Mafia as a "cartel of private protection firms", whose primary business is [protection racketeering](/wiki/Protection_racket): they use their fearsome reputation for violence to deter people from swindling, robbing, or competing with those who pay them for protection. For many businessmen in Sicily, they provide an essential service when they cannot rely on the police and judiciary to enforce their contracts and protect their properties from thieves (this is often because they are engaged in [black market](/wiki/Black_market) deals). Scholars have observed that many other societies around the world have criminal organizations of their own that provide essentially the same protection service through similar methods.

For instance, in Russia after the collapse of Communism, the state security system had all but collapsed, forcing businessmen to hire criminal gangs to enforce their contracts and protect their properties from thieves. These gangs are popularly called "the Russian Mafia" by foreigners, but they prefer to go by the term [*krysha*](/wiki/Russian_mafia). [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

### Mafia-type organizations under Italian law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

Article 416-bis of the Italian Penal Code defines a Mafia-type association (*associazone di tipo Mafioso*) as one where "those belonging to the association exploit the potential for intimidation which their membership gives them, and the compliance and [omertà](/wiki/Omertà) which membership entails and which lead to the committing of crimes, the direct or indirect assumption of management or control of financial activities, concessions, permissions, enterprises and public services for the purpose of deriving profit or wrongful advantages for themselves or others."<ref name=seindal>Seindal, *Mafia: money and politics in Sicily*, [p. 20](https://books.google.com/books?id=kJf-oKqos1YC&lpg=PA20)</ref>[[7]](#cite_note-7)

## International[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

Mafia-proper can refer to either:

* [American Mafia](/wiki/American_Mafia)
* [Sicilian Mafia](/wiki/Sicilian_Mafia)

### Italy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

Other Italian criminal organizations include:

* [Camorra](/wiki/Camorra), operating in the region of [Campania](/wiki/Campania)
* ['Ndrangheta](/wiki/'Ndrangheta), in [Calabria](/wiki/Calabria)
* [Sacra Corona Unita](/wiki/Sacra_Corona_Unita), in [Apulia](/wiki/Apulia)
* [Stidda](/wiki/Stidda) and [Cosa Nostra](/wiki/Sicilian_Mafia) in [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily)

### Other countries[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

* [Aboriginal-based organized crime](/wiki/Aboriginal-based_organized_crime)
* [Afghanistan](/wiki/Corruption_in_Afghanistan)
* [African-American gangs](/wiki/African-American_organized_crime), including
  + [Bloods](/wiki/Bloods)
  + [Crips](/wiki/Crips)
  + [Gangster Disciples](/wiki/Gangster_Disciples)
* [Albanian mafia](/wiki/Albanian_mafia)
* [Armenian mafia](/wiki/Armenian_Power)
* [Aryan Brotherhood](/wiki/Aryan_Brotherhood)
* Asian-American gangs, including
  + [Born To Kill](/wiki/Born_to_Kill_(gang))
  + [Menace of Destruction](/wiki/Menace_of_Destruction)
  + [Sons of Samoa](/wiki/Sons_of_Samoa)
  + [Tiny Rascal gang](/wiki/Tiny_Rascal_gang)
* [Australian mafia](/wiki/Organised_crime_in_Australia)
* [Azeri mafia](/wiki/Azerbaijani_mafia)
* [Black Mafia](/wiki/Black_Mafia)
* [British crime firms](/wiki/British_firms_(organized_crime)), including
  + [Arif crime family](/wiki/Arifs_(gang))
  + [Clerkenwell crime syndicate](/wiki/Clerkenwell_crime_syndicate)
  + [Liverpool mafia](/wiki/Crime_in_Liverpool)
  + [Thompson crime family](/wiki/Arthur_Thompson_(gangster))
* [Bulgarian mafia](/wiki/Bulgarian_mafia)
* [Cape Verdean organized crime](/wiki/Cape_Verdean_organized_crime)
* [Chaldean mafia](/wiki/Chaldean_Mafia)
* [Chechen mafia](/wiki/Chechen_mafia)
* [Corsican mafia](/wiki/Corsican_mafia)
* [Cuban mafia](/wiki/José_Miguel_Battle,_Sr.)
* [Dixie mafia](/wiki/Dixie_Mafia)
* [Dutch mafia](/wiki/Penose), including
  + [Delta crime syndicate](/wiki/Klaas_Bruinsma_(drug_lord))
  + [Dutch-Moroccan organized crime](/wiki/Penose#Moroccan_crime_groups)
  + [Moluccan Kajahatan](/wiki/Penose#Moluccan_Kajahatan)
* [French mafia](/wiki/Milieu_(organized_crime_in_France))
* [Georgian mafia](/wiki/Georgian_mafia)
* [Greek mafia](/wiki/Greek_mafia)
* Hispanic-American gangs, including
  + [Latin Kings](/wiki/Latin_Kings_(gang))
  + [Mara Salvatrucha](/wiki/MS-13)
  + [Ñetas](/wiki/Ñetas)
  + [Trinitarios](/wiki/Trinitario)
* [Indian mafia](/wiki/Indo-Canadian_organized_crime)
* [Irish mafia](/wiki/Irish_Mob)
* [Israeli mafia](/wiki/Israeli_mafia), including
  + [Abergil crime family](/wiki/Abergil_crime_family)
* [Kkangpae](/wiki/Kkangpae)
* [Lebanese crime families](/wiki/Lebanese_mafia), including
  + [Al-Zein Clan](/wiki/Al-Zein_Clan)
  + [Miri-Clan](/wiki/Miri-Clan)
* Mexican-American prison gangs, including
  + [Barrio Azteca](/wiki/Barrio_Azteca)
  + [Mexican mafia](/wiki/Mexican_Mafia)
  + [Nuestra Familia](/wiki/Nuestra_Familia)
  + [Texas Syndicate](/wiki/Texas_Syndicate)
* [Mexican cartels](/wiki/Mexican_Drug_War), including
  + [Gulf Cartel](/wiki/Gulf_Cartel)
  + [Juárez Cartel](/wiki/Juárez_Cartel)
  + [Los Zetas](/wiki/Los_Zetas)
  + [Sinaloa Cartel](/wiki/Sinaloa_Cartel)
* [Mungiki](/wiki/Mungiki)
* [Neo-paramilitary criminal gangs](/wiki/Anti-guerrilla_paramilitarism_in_Colombia#Post-AUC_successor_criminal_groups), also called BACRIM, in Colombia
* [Nigerian mafia](/wiki/Organized_crime_in_Nigeria)
* [No Limit Soldiers](/wiki/No_Limit_Soldiers_(organized_crime_group))
* [North Korea's illicit activities](/wiki/North_Korea's_illicit_activities)
* Outlaw motorcycle gangs, including
  + [Bandidos MC](/wiki/Bandidos_Motorcycle_Club)
  + [Hells Angels MC](/wiki/Hells_Angels)
  + [Mongols MC](/wiki/Mongols_Motorcycle_Club)
  + [Outlaws MC](/wiki/Outlaws_Motorcycle_Club)
  + [Pagans MC](/wiki/Pagan's_Motorcycle_Club)
  + [Satudarah MC](/wiki/Satudarah)
* [Pakistani mafia](/wiki/Organised_crime_in_Pakistan)
* [Polish mafia](/wiki/Polish-American_organized_crime)
* [Russian mafia](/wiki/Russian_mafia)
* [Serbian mafia](/wiki/Serbian_mafia)
* [The Company](/wiki/The_Company_(Hawaiian_organized_crime))
* [Tongs](/wiki/Tong_(organization))
* [Triads](/wiki/Triad_(organized_crime)),[[8]](#cite_note-8) including
  + [14K Triad](/wiki/14K_Triad)
  + [Bamboo Union](/wiki/Bamboo_Union)
  + [Sun Yee On](/wiki/Sun_Yee_On)
* [Turkish](/wiki/Turkish_mafia#Turkish_crime_groups) and [Kurdish mafia](/wiki/Turkish_mafia#Kurdish_crime_groups)
* [Ukrainian mafia](/wiki/Ukrainian_mafia)
* [VVT](/wiki/VVT_(gang))
* [Yakuza](/wiki/Yakuza)
* [Yardies](/wiki/Yardie)
* [Zoe Pound](/wiki/Zoe_Pound)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

### Sources[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

* Albanese, Jay S., Das, Dilip K. & Verma, Arvind (2003). [*Organized Crime: World Perspectives*](https://books.google.com/books?id=SXcuAQAAIAAJ). Prentice Hall. ISBN 9780130481993
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* Hess, Henner (1998). [*Mafia & Mafiosi: Origin, Power and Myth*](https://books.google.com/books?id=izNdhCqsh5QC). London: Hurst & Co Publishers. ISBN 1-85065-500-6
* Mosca, Gaetano (2014). [*"What is Mafia"*](https://books.google.com/books?id=NzNhBAAAQBAJ). M&J, 2014. Translation of the book "Cosa è la Mafia", Giornale degli Economisti, Luglio 1901, pp. 236–62. ISBN 979-11-85666-00-6
* Paoli, Letizia (2003). *Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-515724-9
* Seindal, René (1998). [*Mafia: Money and Politics in Sicily, 1950-1997*](https://books.google.com/books?id=kJf-oKqos1YC). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press. ISBN 87-7289-455-5
* Servadio, Gaia (1976). *Mafioso: a history of the Mafia from its origins to the present day*. London: Secker & Warburg. ISBN 0-436-44700-2

[Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

[Category:Organized crime](/wiki/Category:Organized_crime)