



## IASPEI PRESS RELEASE ON THE L'AQUILA SENTENCE

The Mw 6.3 earthquake, that occurred in L'Aquila, Central Italy on April 6, 2009, killed 309 people, 1500 citizens were injured, and 30000 people lost their homes. On October 22, 2012, an Italian court in L'Aquila convicted seven scientists for failing to adequately warn residents before the earthquake struck Central Italy. All are members of the National Great Risks Commission, and several are prominent Italian seismologists and disaster experts. They were accused of involuntary manslaughter, negligence and errors in the assessment of the earthquake precursors and sentenced to six years in prison and payment of monetary compensations to relatives of those killed and injured.

On October 26, 2012, the European Seismological Commission (ESC), as a Commission of the International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth's Interior (IASPEI) endorsed and adhered to the IASPEI Press Release on the L'Aquila verdict. The original text of the IASPEI Press Release is given below. The main objective pursued by the Editorial Board when publishing this statement is to contribute to the awareness of the international scientific community about potential consequences of seismic events.

Землетрясение, произошедшее в г. Аквила, Центральная Италия, 6 апреля 2009 года, Mw=6.3, унесло жизни 309 человек, полторы тысячи горожан получили травмы, 30 тысяч остались без крова. 22 октября 2012 г. суд этого итальянского города обвинил семерых известных итальянских ученых-сейсмологов и членов комиссии по определению рисков службы гражданской обороны Италии «в непредумышленном убийстве, халатности и ошибках в оценке сейсмических событий, предшествующих землетрясению» и приговорил их к шести годам лишения свободы и выплате денежных компенсаций родственникам погибших и пострадавшим.

26 октября 2012 г. Европейская сейсмологическая комиссия (ЕСК), являющаяся комиссией Международной ассоциации сейсмологии и физики недр Земли (МАСФНЗ), выразила поддержку и солидарность с заявлением МАСФНЗ по поводу приговора суда в Аквиле, которое публикуется ниже. Основная цель, которую преследует редакция, публикуя это заявление, заключается в информировании научного международного сообщества о возможных последствиях произошедшего события.



### EUROPEAN SEISMOLOGICAL COMMISSION

A Commission of the International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth's Interior

26 October 2012

#### ESC STATEMENT ON L'AQUILA SENTENCE

The European Seismological Commission (ESC) as a Commission of the International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth's Interior (IASPEI) endorses and adheres to the IASPEI Press Release on the L'Aquila sentence ([http://www.iaspei.org/news\\_items/laquila\\_IASPEI\\_press\\_release\\_final.pdf](http://www.iaspei.org/news_items/laquila_IASPEI_press_release_final.pdf))

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## IASPEI PRESS RELEASE ON THE L'AQUILA SENTENCE

The International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth Interior (IASPEI)<sup>1</sup>, on behalf of the world community of seismologists, expresses its deepest concern for the L'Aquila verdict and prison sentence, that condemns for involuntary manslaughter seven prominent Italian scientists and members of the Great Risks Commission of the Italian Civil Defense, due to negligence and errors in the evaluation and communication of the seismic crisis preceding the L'Aquila earthquake of April 6, 2009, resulting in the regretful death of 309 people.

The mission of IASPEI is to advance global seismological knowledge to mitigate the effects and minimize the victims of earthquakes. The trial in L'Aquila condemns some of IASPEI's most brilliant scientists, who dedicated their lives to the reduction of seismic risk and to whom go our sympathy and support.

We do not express here opinions on the Italian judiciary system nor on the details of the sentence, but the trial in L'Aquila sets a disturbing and unprecedented case in linking the free expression of scientific opinions to casualties resulting from the collapse of poorly built or maintained buildings during earthquakes, with issues and ramifications relevant to the whole seismological community:

- IASPEI adheres to the statement on Freedom to Conduct Science and Responsibilities of Scientists<sup>2</sup> of the International Union of Geophysics and Geodesy and to the principles of the Universality of Science<sup>3</sup> of the International Council for Science: the free thinking and conduct of scientific development is a principle of modern society and cannot be hindered or limited by threats of personal retaliation.
- IASPEI supports the development, testing and presentation of new evidence on earthquake forecasting and prediction; however, IASPEI is of the opinion that reliable short-term prediction of earthquakes is not possible at present; claims to the contrary may induce false expectations and incorrect behavior in the population and authorities, and are not supported by IASPEI.
- When serving on high-level advisory panels for governments and authorities, scientists have the duty to provide the state of knowledge in a comprehensive and unbiased fashion, to enable authorities to take the required mitigation actions. This cannot be achieved under the threat of public prosecution. A negative impact of this trial and sentence will be to make scientists reluctant to serve on risk advisory commissions or express expert opinions.
- Communication in a language understandable to public and authorities is of crucial importance, including the communication of uncertainties associated to all evaluations and projections.
- Scientists cannot be held responsible for effects that are not under their responsibility. Governments and authorities are responsible to ensure that appropriate strategies and measures for risk mitigation are in place and applied. Roles and responsibilities in the earthquake mitigation chain need to be clearly defined, understood and adhered to.

IASPEI is confident that the L'Aquila case will provide the opportunity to develop a proper link between science, policy makers and society in order to avoid any type of miscommunication of information and scientific knowledge in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iaspei.org>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.iugg.org/resolutions/IUGG\\_for\\_freedom\\_to\\_conduct\\_science.pdf](http://www.iugg.org/resolutions/IUGG_for_freedom_to_conduct_science.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.icsu.org/about-icsu/structure/committees/freedom-responsibility/statute-5>