

You are considered the **victim of a crime**, 'offended party', if it is accepted that you hold a **legal right** that is protected by the criminal legislation which has been breached by an act that constitutes an offence under national law, i.e. that you have suffered the injury that forms part of the *essence* of the criminal act. You **suffer injury in civil law as a result of a crime** when you suffer damage (material or non-material, but in any case damage that can be valued in financial terms) as a result of the crime. Usually, the offended party in criminal law and the injured party in civil law are the same, except, for example, in murder cases, where the victim is the person killed, while their family members are the injured parties and have the right to go to court and obtain compensation for the damage they have suffered.

The criminal law and the civil law provide a victim with various individual rights before, during and after the proceedings.

In Italy, criminal proceedings begin with preliminary inquiries. The police and the public prosecutor investigate the case. At the end of these inquiries, the public prosecutor may bring charges or ask the Judge in charge of preliminary inquiries to close the case. For some criminal offences proceedings may begin only if you, as the victim, submit a complaint to the police or prosecution service.

During the trial, the court examines the evidence gathered and establishes whether the defendant is guilty. Proceedings end when the defendant is sentenced or acquitted by the court, with the possibility of making an appeal to a higher court.

As the victim, you may play an important role in the criminal proceedings, and consequently there are a number of rights you may exercise. You may participate as a victim (offended party) **without a specific legal status, or play a more active role by officially bringing a civil action against the offender**.

Click on the links below to find the information that you need

[1 - My rights as a victim of crime](#)

[2 - Reporting a crime and my rights during the investigation or trial](#)

[3 - My rights after trial](#)

[4 - Compensation](#)

[5 - My rights to support and assistance](#)

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