

Italian prosecutors investigate 18 parties in connection with Milan cladding fire

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Italian prosecutors have announced that 18 parties connected to the design, construction and management of a tower block which was involved in a devastating fire last August have been investigated for the crime of ‘culpable disaster’.



The Torre del Moro fire in Milan in August 2021 (picture: Alamy)

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In a statement issued earlier this month, the public prosecutor at the Court of Milan called the lack of any deaths in the Torre del Moro fire “miraculous” and said it was “certainly determined by the fact that it was the afternoon of a hot Sunday in late August and most residents of the condominiums were not at home” (translated).

The tower was clad in aluminium composite material (ACM) – the same material as used on Grenfell Tower.

The prosecutor’s statement said results of its investigation have been communicated to 15 of 18 parties under investigation – including builders/commissioners of the construction, clients of the work, apartment sellers, technicians appointed by the builders, producers, distributors and installers of the cladding materials and authors of the fire certificate issued for the building in 2011.

It did not name the parties, but said they were “accused of the crime of culpable disaster... for having contributed to the design and construction flaws of the exterior of the building and to the choice of the panels covering the sails of the building, responsible for the uncontrollable spread of the fire”.

The statement said: “The episode constitutes a case of particular gravity, with multiple, complex implications.”

“It has in fact emerged that identical materials and the same installation techniques, which transformed the Milan [tower] into a torch, are used in Italy and in other countries for the facades of various public and civil buildings,” the statement added.

When the Grenfell Tower Inquiry investigated the sale of ACM panels, it also uncovered evidence of their sale and use in Spain, France and the Middle East.

Despite a programme of identifying other buildings with this cladding around the UK, many other European nations have instituted no such process.

A Fire Safety Europe comparative report of 19 countries written in October 2020 found Italy to have some of the most lax rules on the continent. It said the country has no requirement for sprinklers, and no mandatory requirements for external wall insulation or cladding systems.