

## Soccer: Napoli fans in mafia link

Naples. More than two dozen of the Napoli fans whose hooligan rampage shocked Italy at the start of the season are linked to the Neapolitan mafia or Camorra, Interior Minister Roberto Maroni said Wednesday.

Reporting to a Senate committee on the incident, Maroni said more than 800 of the 3,000 fans who attended the AS Roma-Napoli game in Rome had criminal records for robbery, drugs, assault and minor offences.

Of these, 27 are believed to have Camorra links, he said, confirming an "hypothesis" made by the city's police chief in the aftermath of the events.

"The presence of such a high number of habitual criminals, in particular those belonging or close to the Camorra, constitutes a further risk factor... (for) violence at matches," Maroni said. On August 31, fans rioted at Naples train station in anger at delays and forced passengers off an Intercity train which they wrecked on their way to the Roma-Napoli game. Four railwaymen were hurt.

Maroni said some 200 fans were involved in this incident, which caused damage estimated at some 500,000 euros.

The fans also stormed through Termini Station in Rome, throwing smoke bombs and fireworks, and vandalised the buses that took them to the stadium.

Two Napoli fans were arrested at the stadium, one with a knife and the other for arguing with an officer, along with three Roma fans.

The five were released pending trial, adding to polemics.

In response, Maroni said Napoli fans identified from video footage would be regarded as organised criminals and receive two-year stadium bans.

At the time, he also banned all Napoli fans from travelling for the rest of the season. Soccer authorities subsequently closed both stands of Napoli's San Paolo stadium - where hard-core fans congregate - for the next four home matches.

In his report to the Senate committee, Maroni said moves to privatise grounds, introduce English-style stewarding and stiffen penalties for attacks on police should be sped up.

Last year authorities stepped up anti-hooligan measures twice, once after a police officer's death in a Catania riot in February and again after a Rome street rampage in November following the death of a Lazio fan killed by a policeman at a motorway service station.

In all, during the course of the season, Italian soccer's match safety panel issued 30 travel bans: 9 to Napoli, 6 to Roma, 4 each to Catania and Atalanta, 3 to Torino and 2 each to Fiorentina and Cagliari.

This year more matches are expected to be attended only by home fans and more games played behind closed doors. Authorities have also pledged to root out extremist political elements from fan groups.