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Chief scientist quits over jail terms for L'Aquila earthquake experts

Michael Day | @michael2day | Wednesday 24 October 2012 00:00 |[Mi pia](#) [Click to follow The Independent](#)

The head of the Major Risks Commission has resigned in protest at the conviction of seven colleagues found guilty of failing to give adequate warning of the L'Aquila earthquake.

"The decision in Aquila is incompatible with a calm and efficient work of the commission," said Professor Luciano Maiani, a senior physicist.

On Monday, Judge Marco Billi in L'Aquila convicted seven members of the commission, including six scientists, on charges of manslaughter for making statements that downplayed the risk of the earthquake that struck in April 2009, killing 308 people.

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The sentences, a six-year prison term each, were even harsher than the four years requested by the prosecutor. The newspaper Corriere della Sera reported that fellow members of the commission – the vice-president Mauro Rosi and the emeritus president Giuseppe Zamberletti – are also likely to quit.

Professor Maiani's resignation reflected the anger of senior scientists. "It will be difficult to appear in public and talk about seismic activity in Italy because of the possibility that researchers can face accusation over any omissions," Professor Stefano Gresta, president of the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology, said after the verdicts.

But some survivors claimed justice had been done after the convictions. Many testified that they remained at home after the early tremors because of the reassuring comments by the committee at a news conference on 31 March 2009, five days before the big earthquake.

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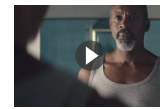
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