



## PREFACE

By **Giuliana Adamo**

In the past three decades the Court, together with the Juvenile District Attorney's Office in Reggio Calabria (South of Italy), has handled more than one hundred cases against minors for mafia-related offenses and over fifty cases of homicide or attempted homicide. Nowadays the same Court finds itself judging the children or siblings of those who were tried earlier, all belonging to the well-established Mafia families of the area. Hence the need for a turning point, which has led to the adoption of civil proceedings for the revocation/suspension/limitation of parental rights, with the aim to provide these children a psychologically and physically normal, calm, and socially acceptable upbringing, thus allowing them the freedom to choose their own destiny, liberated and emancipated from criminal models and from the hopeless constraints of their dominant family teachings. This reintegration and rehabilitation process also includes a parallel component for their parents, especially the mothers, if they agree to its undertaking with the assistance of the State. After a birth in a mafia family, there begins an educational process by which the parents raise their children to adulthood. Here lies the topic of the present volume. Because it has been demonstrated that the 'Ndrangheta is founded on the blood ties between its members – a guarantor even today of its survival and power – it is through intervention within this family structure that the State must act to counter the transmission of mafia values to these children. In other words, the 'Ndrangheta is like an army always at war against the State and the Law and, as with all armies, it has a constant need to beef up the ranks of its soldiers. These soldiers are the children of its members. With the removal of its soldiers, the army witnesses the dismantling of its *raison d'être*. And for the sake of their children, mothers as well begin to find reasons to dissociate from the system of mafia affiliation. This point has led to the revolutionary legal and social action of Roberto Di Bella, former President of the Juvenile Court of Reggio Calabria (September 2011- September 2020)<sup>1, \*</sup> and Giuseppina Latella, former President of the District Attorney's Office Juvenile Division, his comrade of many battles. As Di Bella notes:

---

<sup>1</sup> Roberto Di Bella (born in 1963) in 1993-2005 was appointed as a judge at the Juvenile Court in Reggio Calabria and, later in 2006-2011 in Messina. From 2020 Di Bella is President of the Juvenile Court of Catania. State.

The objective is to safeguard these children, to give them an opportunity to have cultural and social opportunities that are distant from their realities; to remove them from an inevitable fate of criminal violence, harsh imprisonment and early death.