

4 JUL 91

R,I,4 - AM-BRF-ITALY-SCIENTOLOG, 07-04 0132 -
AM-BRF--Italy-Scientology,0121

Court Acquits Some Scientology Followers, Convicts Others

MILAN, Italy (AP) <--> A Milan court has acquitted 67 Scientology followers of charges ranging from criminal association to tax evasion, but it convicted six others of deceiving confused people.

While not ruling that the group is a church, as Scientologists contend, the court said Wednesday that it is a non-profit organization and thus need not report to the Italian tax office.

The trial was brought after a five-year investigation into activities of Scientology centers in Italy after disenchanted followers filed lawsuits.

The six who were convicted of deceiving confused or weak people were sentenced to prison terms of one to two years.

The prosecutor appealed the acquittals.

AP-DS-07-04-91 1213EDT