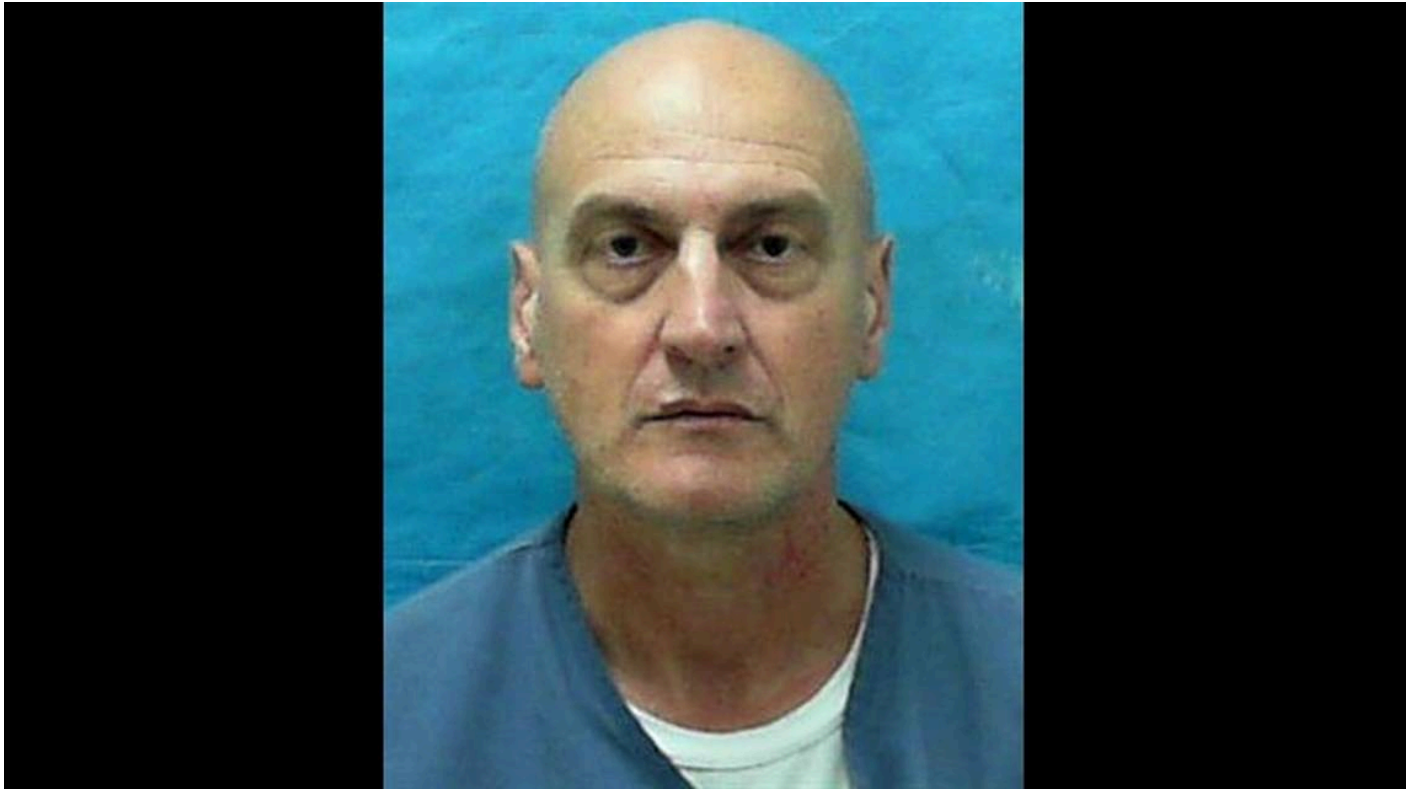


SOUTH FLORIDA

# Italian filmmaker was sentenced to life for Miami murder. Now, he's in Italy finishing term

BY JAY WEAVER

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Enrico Forti - *Florida Corrections*

In 1998, an Australian man's bullet-ridden body was found face down on a Virginia Key beach.

Two years later, a Miami jury convicted Italian filmmaker Enrico "Chico" Forti of the murder of Anthony "Dale" Pike, leading to a life sentence in Florida.

Forti maintained his innocence but on appeal failed to overturn his murder conviction, which entailed a dispute with Pike over the ownership of a Spanish resort. This month, however, Forti finally won a controversial legal victory allowing him to be transferred to Italy for the rest of his life term behind bars.

With support from the Italian government, the 65-year-old Forti prevailed with a transfer petition that was backed by Gov. Ron DeSantis, the Justice Department and a Miami federal magistrate judge, who authorized his move in mid-May. Even Pike's family and the Australian government accepted the transfer of Forti to a prison in his native Italy, according to court records.

Such transfers are uncommon but allowed under treaties between the United States and most European countries. The only opposition to Forti's transfer came from the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office, which wanted him to complete his life sentence in South Florida.

## **RUNDLE NOT HAPPY WITH TRANSFER BACK TO ITALY**

Four years ago, Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said she was "disappointed with the DeSantis administration's decision" to send Forti back to Italy. On Tuesday, her office declined to comment on Forti's transfer to Italy this month.

Forti's attorney, Joe Tacopina, based in New York, said he worked with both Italian and U.S. authorities on his extradition to Italy.

“It was a long journey, but justice finally arrived,” Tacopina said Tuesday. “He got to see his mother.”

On May 15, Forti signed a consent form filed in Miami federal court that stated he was voluntarily agreeing to his transfer to a prison in Italy for the remainder of his Florida sentence.

“My conviction or sentence can only be modified or set aside through appropriate proceedings brought by me or on my behalf in the United States of America,” read the form, signed by Forti and Magistrate Judge Edwin Torres. “My sentence will be carried out according to the laws of Italy.”

Three days later, Forti landed at Pratica di Mare air base southwest of Rome on an Italian military plane, where he was met by Italian premier Giorgia Meloni. Forti, a former windsurfing champion and TV producer, was transferred to a prison in Verona, according to published reports in Italy.

During a visit to Washington in March, Meloni announced that an agreement had been reached for Forti to return from the United States to serve the rest of his term in his homeland.

Justice minister Carlo Nordio subsequently said that Forti’s return to Italy was “an important, long-awaited goal,” expressing the hope that all necessary steps would be “completed as quickly as possible to allow Forti to continue serving his sentence in his country, close to his loved ones.”

The proposed transfer was first made public in 2020 when then-Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio announced the news in a Facebook post. Forti’s conviction for murder remains intact.

Forti’s case is not widely known in the United States, but journalists in Italy have long championed him as an example of American justice gone awry, even likening it to the notorious case of American Amanda Knox, who was imprisoned for murder in Italy and ultimately freed.

## DESANTIS APPROVES HIS TRANSFER

In late 2020, after the Justice Department intervened at the behest of Italian authorities, DeSantis gave his approval to the transfer “following the Italian government’s assurance that Mr. Forti will serve the entire remainder of his Florida prison sentence in Italy.”

At trial two decades earlier, police and prosecutors accused Forti of killing Pike, an Australian whose father owned a resort on the Spanish island Ibiza.

Dale Pike flew to Miami in February 1998, after he intercepted a fax where his father appeared to have signed his exclusive resort over to Forti. Dale Pike was determined to get to the bottom of what had happened.

Forti offered to pick him up at Miami International Airport so they could talk it over. Dale Pike was later found shot to death in an area known as Sewer Beach on Virginia Key.

The Pike murder wasn’t the first time Forti made headlines in South Florida.

When spree killer Andrew Cunanan was found dead aboard a Miami Beach houseboat in 1997, Forti presented papers showing he was the boat’s latest owner.

Forti claimed exclusive film rights until 2000, and made thousands renting the boat to tabloid TV shows eager to show the final hiding place of Cunanan, who shot and killed [fashion icon Gianni Versace on the steps of his Ocean Drive mansion in Miami Beach](#).

Forti’s own movie was never filmed there: The boat sank just before Pike’s murder.

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Jay Weaver writes about federal crime at the crossroads of South Florida and Latin America. Since joining the Miami Herald in 1999, he's covered the federal courts nonstop, from Elian Gonzalez's custody battle to Alex Rodriguez's steroid abuse. He was part of the Herald teams that won the 2001 and 2022 Pulitzer Prizes for breaking news on Elian's seizure by federal agents and the collapse of a Surfside condo building killing 98 people. He and three Herald colleagues were 2019 Pulitzer Prize finalists for explanatory reporting on gold smuggling between South America and Miami.

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