

4 Jailed Over Azeri Massacre

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BAKU, Azerbaijan — Three men in Azerbaijan were jailed for life and a fourth for 11 years on Tuesday over a 2009 gun massacre at the country's prestigious State Oil Academy.

The attack at the institute on April 30 last year, which killed 12 students and staff, sent shockwaves through the tightly controlled country. The precise circumstances and motive remain unclear.

Investigators initially described the lone gunman, a 29-year-old Georgian citizen of Azeri origin, Farda Gadirov, as a schizophrenic who had recorded a videotape expressing hatred for Azeri society. He killed himself at the scene.

But police later arrested four ethnic Azeris from Gadirov's native Marneuli region of Georgia and said the group had helped organize the attack at the request of a Georgian citizen of Armenian origin, who offered them \$50,000.

Azerbaijan and Armenia are sworn enemies in the festering conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountain region that threw off Azeri rule with Armenian backing in the early 1990s.

Azeri authorities have issued an international arrest warrant for the Armenian man, identified as Mardun Gumashyan, 59.

The four defendants — Nadir Aliyev, Javidan Amirov, Najaf Suleimanov and Ariz Gabulov — denied charges of terrorism, murder and weapons smuggling. They wept as the judge sentenced three of them to life and Gabulov to 11 years.

Investigators said Gadirov entered the university shortly after the bell for morning classes, climbing the stairs and firing a Russian-made semi-automatic pistol. He shot dead 12 people and wounded another 13 before killing himself.

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