

Boston Bomber's Russian Relatives Tell Jury he Cried During 'The Lion King'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BOSTON — Russian relatives of Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev began testifying Monday at his federal death penalty trial, with one cousin extolling Tsarnaev's kindness as a child and a prosecutor asking if she considered bombing innocent people an act of kindness.

Raisat Suleimanova, Tsarnaev's first cousin, said she traveled from Russia to testify on his behalf because she loves him. She described Tsarnaev, now 21, as so gentle that he cried while watching "The Lion King" with his aunt.

"I think that his kindness made everybody around him kind," Suleimanova said through a Russian translator.

Assistant U.S. Attorney William Weinreb pounced, asking her if she believes a deadly attack on innocent civilians can be considered kind. Tsarnaev's lawyer objected, and Suleimanova was not allowed to answer the question.

In all, five of Tsarnaev's family members are expected to take the witness stand in federal court.

Prosecutors urged Judge George O'Toole Jr. last week to press Tsarnaev's lawyers to make sure his relatives testify soon because 16 FBI agents have been assigned to guard and protect them while they are in the United States. The family members arrived in Boston on April 23.

"It's an enormous expense and distraction for the agency, and that's just part of the expense that the government has endured," Weinreb said during a sidebar discussion in court with Tsarnaev's lawyers and the judge, according to a transcript that was made public.

Three people were killed and more than 260 were injured when two pressure-cooker bombs exploded near the marathon finish line April 15, 2013.

Tsarnaev was convicted last month of 30 federal charges in the bombings, including 17 that carry the possibility of the death penalty. He moved to the U.S. with his family in 2002 and committed the bombings when he was 19.

His Russian relatives were expected to testify Thursday, but the trial was suspended that day because a juror became ill.

Prosecutors say Tsarnaev was an equal partner in the bombings with his radicalized older brother, Tamerlan, and have urged the jury to sentence him to death.

Tsarnaev's lawyers say Tamerlan, 26, was the mastermind of the attack and lured his brother into his plan. Tamerlan died days after the bombings following a shootout with police.

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