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# Trial Begins in Moscow Over Crocus Concert Hall Attack

August 04, 2025



**Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Nineteen people went on trial in Moscow on Monday over last year's deadly shooting at a popular concert venue outside the Russian capital.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the March 22, 2024, attack at Crocus City Hall, in which four gunmen killed 149 people and injured more than 600 others. Nearly half of the victims died from smoke and carbon monoxide inhalation after a fire broke out inside the venue, rather than directly from gunfire, according to court documents cited by the state-run TASS news agency.

Four of the defendants, identified as Tajik nationals Dalerjon Mirzoyev, Saidakrami Murodali Rachabalizoda, Shamsidin Fariduni and Muhammadsobir Faizov, are accused of carrying out the attack. All but Faizov have pleaded guilty to terrorism-related charges. Fifteen others were charged with aiding and abetting the attackers.

An AFP reporter in the courtroom said some defendants appeared in glass enclosures with

their hands cuffed behind their backs. Around 30 survivors also attended the hearing.

The trial is being held at the Moscow City Court by a three-judge panel from the Second Western District Military Court. The panel granted a prosecution request to close the proceedings to the public, citing concerns over the safety of trial participants, according to the RBC news outlet.

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A lawyer representing the victims asked the court to keep the part of the trial where evidence is presented closed, but allow the rest to remain open due to the high public interest in the case.

Russian media reported that the public portion of the hearing on Monday lasted less than 45 minutes and included the identification of the defendants and a discussion of civil lawsuits. Subsequent hearings are scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday, according to the court's website.

Police investigators claim the attack was carried out in the interests of Ukraine in order to destabilize Russia, allegations that authorities in Kyiv have rejected. President Vladimir Putin said last year that the suspected gunmen tried to flee to Ukraine after the attack but were captured near the border.

BBC Russia reported that investigators are trying to prove dual theories: that the attack was organized by the Islamic State and carried out with support from foreign intelligence services acting in Ukraine's interests.

A separate investigation is underway into six additional suspects, including two alleged masterminds who remain at large. They are accused of recruiting the attackers and organizing their training abroad.

*AFP contributed to this report.*

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