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State Prosecutors Seek Life Sentences for 15 Defendants in Crocus City Hall Case

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Defendants appear in court during a hearing on the Crocus City Hall attack. **Sergei Fadeichev / TASS**

Russian state prosecutors are seeking life prison sentences for 15 defendants accused of carrying out or being connected to the mass shooting at Moscow's Crocus City Hall nearly two years ago, the Prosecutor General's Office said Monday.

The requests came as closing arguments began in the trial of 19 defendants charged in the March 2024 attack. Four gunmen, all citizens of Tajikistan, are accused of opening fire at the popular concert venue, killing 149 people and wounding more than 600.

The other people standing trial were charged with helping to plan or facilitate the attack. Aside from the 15 life-sentence requests, state prosecutors are seeking prison terms ranging from 20 to 23 years for the remaining four defendants, according to court filings.

Kommersant reported that those sentence requests were for a businessman in whose

apartment the accused gunmen lived, as well as for a father and two sons who are accused of providing the car used to reach Crocus City Hall on the night of the shooting.

Lyudmila Ayvar, a lawyer representing 139 victims, told Kommersant that the requested sentences were "adequate and proportionate to the crimes." The newspaper described them as some of the harshest sought-after terms in modern Russian history.

Several defendants confessed to their charges during a preliminary investigation but entered only a partial guilty plea once the trial began, Ayvar said, in what she characterized as an effort to "downplay their role."

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack on Crocus City Hall. Russian investigators, however, have alleged that the assault was carried out in the interests of Ukraine to destabilize Russia — a claim that Ukrainian authorities have denied.

Kommersant did not report when the court is expected to deliver its verdict.

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