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Crocus City Hall Gunmen Sentenced to Life in Prison

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Valery Sharifulin / TASS

Moscow's Second Western District Military Court on Thursday sentenced four gunmen to life in prison after they were found guilty of killing 149 people and wounding hundreds of others in a mass shooting near Moscow in March 2024.

Three of the shooters, Shamsidin Fariduni, Dalerjon Mirzoyev and Muhammadsobir Fayzov, had pleaded guilty in court. The fourth, Saidakrami Murodali Rachabalizoda, maintained his innocence throughout the trial and said he had "carried out Jihad" when he and the other men gunned down crowds of people at the Crocus City Hall concert venue in the Moscow suburb of Krasnogorsk.

All of the gunmen are citizens of the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan and were arrested shortly after the attack on March 22, 2024. They were ordered to spend their sentences at a special regime penal colony. A judge also fined them each 990,000 rubles ($12,500).

Another 11 defendants received life sentences for aiding and abetting terrorism, with

accusations ranging from transporting weapons and ammunition to providing money to the gunmen. Others were accused of having links to terrorist groups.

Four others were sentenced to between 19 years and 11 months and 22.5 years in prison for selling a car to the gunmen and helping them rent out an apartment.

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The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack on Crocus City Hall, which left 600 people wounded in addition to the dead. Russian investigators, however, have alleged that the shooting was carried out with the help of Ukraine to destabilize Russia — a claim that Ukrainian authorities have denied.

The Investigative Committee, Russia's top investigative body, identified the 19 men who stood trial as members of ISIS-K and the Batal-Hadji Belkhoroev religious movement, a Sufi Islam branch in the North Caucasus which Russian authorities recognize as a terrorist organization.

On Thursday, relatives of some of the victims stood in court as the verdict against the nearly two dozen defendants was read out, AFP reported. Lawyers said some of the victims are still being treated for their injuries, while some experience various forms of PTSD.

Law enforcement authorities said an investigation into two alleged organizers of the Crocus City Hall attack, as well as four members of a terrorist group, remains ongoing. Police are still trying to establish their whereabouts.

Following the arrest of the four gunmen in March 2024, graphic images shared online seemed to show some of them undergoing various acts of torture. The men later appeared in court with visible cuts, bruises and other injuries.

Their suspected torture drew condemnation from Tajikistan and rights groups.

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