

DOJ Seeks Death Penalty for Man Who Shouted 'Free Palestine' While Killing 2 Israeli Embassy Staffers

Federal prosecutors announced Friday they will seek the death penalty for Elias Rodriguez, the man charged with killing two Israeli Embassy staffers outside the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C., in May 2025.

U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro disclosed the decision at a news conference, vowing maximum accountability for what prosecutors have described as a calculated, ideologically driven attack. "My message to anyone who seeks to commit political violence in this district: D.C. is not the place. You will be held accountable, and you will face the full wrath of the law," she said.

Rodriguez is charged with the murders of Yaron Lischinsky, 30, an Israeli citizen, and Sarah Milgrim, 26, an American citizen, who were leaving a "Young Diplomats Reception" at the museum when Rodriguez opened fire. The couple was weeks away from becoming engaged.



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During the shooting, Rodriguez shouted "Free Palestine." After entering the museum, he told bystanders and then investigators, "I did it for Palestine. I did it for Gaza." Authorities say he also described an Air Force member who set himself on fire outside the Israeli Embassy in February 2024 as "courageous" and a "martyr."

Prosecutors say the attack was premeditated. Rodriguez flew to

the Washington area from Chicago with a handgun loaded in his checked luggage specifically for the event. Surveillance footage shows him pacing outside the museum before approaching a group of four people, opening fire, then advancing toward Lischinsky and Milgrim as they fell to the ground and firing additional shots. He reloaded before jogging away.

The indictment includes hate crime charges resulting in death, murder of a foreign official, and multiple terrorism-related counts. To secure the death penalty, federal prosecutors must prove Rodriguez specifically targeted the victims because they were Jewish and Israeli.

“He targeted individuals whom he perceived to have attended an event for young Jewish professionals, organized by the American Jewish Committee and hosted at the Capital Jewish Museum, to amplify the effect of his crimes,” prosecutors wrote in Friday’s court filing.

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