

Gabrielle Giffords Shooter Sentenced to Life in Prison

The man who pleaded guilty to a deadly Arizona shooting rampage that wounded former U.S. Rep. **Gabrielle Giffords** was sentenced to life in prison Thursday.

U.S. District Judge Larry Burns sentenced 24-year-old **Jared Lee Loughner** for the January 2011 attack that left six people dead and Giffords and others wounded.

Loughner pleaded guilty to federal charges under an agreement that guarantees he will spend the rest of his life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The hearing marked the first time victims—including Giffords—could confront Loughner in court.

Her astronaut husband, Mark Kelly, did all the talking for her, as the couple looked at Loughner and told him how his deadly rampage at the former congresswoman's political meeting had upended her life.

"Her life has been forever changed. Plans she had for our family and her career have been immeasurably altered," Kelly said. "Every day is a continuous struggle to do those things she once was so good at."

Loughner showed no emotion, and looked at the other victims. His mother sobbed nearby.

"Mr. Loughner, you may have put a bullet through her head but you haven't put a dent in her spirit and her commitment to make the world a better place," Kelly said.

Giffords kissed Kelly when he was done. He grabbed her hand and they walked away, with her limping.

Earlier, Loughner told Burns that he will not be speaking at the hearing.

Loughner pleaded guilty three months ago to 19 federal charges under an agreement that guarantees he will spend the rest of his life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Both sides reached the deal after a judge declared that Loughner was able to understand the charges against him. After the shooting, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and underwent forcible psychotropic drug treatments.

At the hearing, Loughner, who wore dress pants and a dark brown shirt with a tie, heard from his victims.

"We've been told about your demons, about the illness that skewed your thinking," said Susan Hileman, at times visibly shaking, to Loughner. "Your parents, your schools, your community, they all failed you.

"It's all true," Hileman said. "It's not enough."

"You pointed a weapon and shot me three times," she said, staring directly at Loughner. He looked back at her. "And now I walk out of this courtroom and into the rest of my life and I won't think of you again."

Some victims, including Giffords, welcomed the plea deal as a way to move on. It spared victims and their families from having to go through a potentially lengthy and traumatic trial and locks up the defendant for life.

Christina Pietz, the court-appointed psychologist who treated Loughner, had warned that although Loughner was competent to plead guilty, he remained severely mentally ill and his condition could deteriorate under the stress of a trial.

When Loughner first arrived at a Missouri prison facility for treatment, he was convinced Giffords was dead, even though he was shown a video of the shooting. He eventually realized she

was alive after he was forcibly medicated.

It's unknown whether Pima County prosecutors, who have discretion on whether to seek the death penalty against Loughner, will file state charges against him. Stephanie Coronado, a spokeswoman for Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall, said Wednesday that no decision had been made.

It's unclear where Loughner will be sent to serve his federal sentence. He could return to a prison medical facility like the one in Springfield, Mo., where he's been treated for more than a year. Or he could end up in a prison such as the federal lockup in Florence, Colo., that houses some of the country's most notorious criminals, including Oklahoma City bombing conspirator Terry Nichols and "Unabomber" Ted Kaczynski.

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