

Judge Blocks Release of Charleston Shooting 911 Calls

Graphic crime scene photographs and audio of 911 emergency phone calls made after a gunman killed nine people in a Charleston church in June will not be released to the public, a South Carolina judge ruled on Wednesday.

Judge J.C. Nicholson said releasing the sensitive materials collected as evidence in the prosecution of accused shooter Dylann Roof would harm the victims in the case.

Nine black churchgoers died when suspected gunman Roof, who is white, opened fire during a Bible study meeting on June 17 at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church, the oldest African-American congregation in the southern United States.

State prosecutors charged Roof, 21, with murder and are seeking the death penalty. He also faces nearly three dozen federal hate crime and weapons charges in what authorities say was a racially motivated rampage.

Nicholson in July blocked the release of all investigative materials gathered in the state's case against Roof, a move challenged by media organizations that argued the gag order was too broad and impeded the public's right to know about the case.

On Wednesday, the judge said audio, video and images that identified the victims or recorded their voices would remain sealed. But he lifted the gag order for the bulk of the other evidence in the case. {eoa}

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