

Prosecutors Seek Life Sentence for Ohio Amish Sect Leader

An Amish sect leader from Ohio convicted of federal hate crimes in a string of hair and beard-cutting attacks on other Amish in 2011 should serve life in prison, prosecutors said on Tuesday.

The prosecutors said in a court filing that Samuel Mullet Sr., who was convicted in September along with 15 of his followers, should receive a life sentence as the mastermind behind the attacks, which targeted six Amish men and two women.

"There is no doubt that Mullet wanted, agreed with and encouraged all of these attacks," the filing said, adding that he had continued to deny responsibility for the assaults.

Mullet, 67, and his followers were **convicted** on multiple counts including **conspiracy** and kidnapping for attacks prosecutors said were motivated by religious disputes between Mullet and other **Amish** religious leaders who had accepted into their communities people Mullet had excommunicated from his Bergholz, Ohio, group. Bergholz is about 100 miles south of Cleveland.

Defense attorneys had argued the assaults were the result of family or financial disputes and not religious differences, and therefore were not **hate crimes**.

The Amish are known for their plain dress, simple living and shunning of technology. Amish women and married Amish men do not cut their hair or beards, because they are symbols of living a religious life.

Mullet's attorney, Edward Bryan, called the **life sentence**

recommendation “off the charts” and requested that Mullet be sentenced to 18 months to 24 months in prison. A federal life sentence for a non-drug offense is “typically reserved for the most heinous of crimes involving murder,” Bryan said in a filing that referred to the **attacks** as minor assaults.

Mullet was not present for any of the attacks, but was accused of encouraging and even orchestrating them. His followers restrained victims and forcibly cut their hair and beards using scissors, clippers, shears and battery-operated razors, witnesses said at trial. The followers also brought back locks of hair and photos of the victims to show Mullet.

Mullet and his followers “face a lifetime of ‘invisible punishments’ outside of the criminal justice system – more so than most defendants due to the unique needs of their lifestyle and the nature of the closed Amish society,” Bryan said.

Prosecutors submitted 14 handwritten letters from Amish community members that supported a lengthy or life sentence for Mullet. The letters accused Mullet of running a cult and many of the writers expressed fear for Bergholz community children.

One Amish community members wrote, “My concern is for all decent citizens if Sam ever gets free. He is a dangerous man if he isn’t repentant. So please be very careful with him!”

Prosecutors sought lesser prison sentences for Mullet’s followers, each of whom was convicted of **conspiracy** and at least one additional charge.

The sentencings are scheduled for Friday before U.S. District Judge Dan Polster in Cleveland.

Editing by David Bailey and Steve Orlofsky.

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