

French prosecutors seek maximum 20-year sentence for man in mass rape case



Frenchwoman Gisele Pelicot, the victim of a mass rape orchestrated by her husband Dominique Pelicot at their home in the southern French town of Mazan, carries flowers as she leaves the court after attending the trial for Dominique Pelicot and 50 co-accused, at the courthouse in

Avignon, France, November 25, 2024. REUTERS/Alexandre Dimou

Dominique Pelicot drugged his wife and invited dozens of strangers to their home to rape her over a nine-year period.

Paris, November 27 (RHC)-- Prosecutors in France have demanded the maximum 20-year prison sentence for a man who organised the mass rape of his then-wife for almost a decade.

Dominique Pelicot knocked his wife Gisele Pelicot unconscious with drugs and invited dozens of strangers to abuse her in their family homes in Paris and the southern town of Mazan between 2011 and 2020.

The 71-year-old admitted to all charges against him in a trial that has scandalised France and drawn worldwide attention to the issue of sexual violence.

Forty-nine other men have also been put on trial for participating in the abuse. Prosecutors are expected to announce what sentences they will seek against the co-accused over the next two days.

Prosecutors have rejected arguments made by many of the men, aged between 21 and 68 at the time of the assaults, that they believed they were participating in a consensual fantasy or were not in their right mind.

Footage played in court over recent weeks, part of some 20,000 videos and pictures recorded by Dominique Pelicot, showed Gisele lying motionless while men assaulted her.

"The accused are trying to shirk responsibility by saying they thought Gisele Pelicot consented," public prosecutor Laure Chabaud told the packed court in the city of Avignon. "But it's not possible, today, in 2024, to consider that," Chabaud added.

Chabaud said that while 20 years is the maximum sentence that can be handed to Dominique, it is "too little in view of the seriousness of the acts that were committed and repeated."

Prosecutors also said they were seeking a 17-year sentence for Jean-Pierre Marechal.

The 63-year-old – who Dominique met on a now-shuttered chatroom of men soliciting rape material – has also admitted to drugging his own wife in order for both men to rape her. Sentencing for the accused is expected to take place at the trial's conclusion around December 20.

Gisele could have demanded the trial be kept behind closed doors, but instead asked for it to be made public. The 71-year-old said she hoped it would help other women speak up and tackle stigma for survivors of sexual violence.

The trial has triggered rallies in support of Gisele in France, and spurred a debate on whether to update the country's rape law, which currently makes no mention of a requirement that sex involve consent.

Instead, prosecutors are required to prove a perpetrator's intent to rape using "violence, coercion, threat or surprise".

[SOURCE: EFE and REUTERS]

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