

Brussels attacks trial: Defendants sue Belgian State over conditions of transport to court

From the [Brussels Times](#)

Since the start of the trial, the six accused men (Mohamed Abrini, Sofien Ayari, Salah Abdeslam, Bilal El Makhouki, Ali El Haddad Asufi and Hervé Bayingana Muhirwa) have been complaining about the conditions in which they are transferred daily from prison to the courthouse in the Brussels district of Haren.

Specifically, the regular strip searches they have to undergo, as well as the blindfolds and headphones with loud music they have to put on while being transported have been given as the reasons for the lawsuit, Belga News Agency reports. The Ministry of Justice has already dismissed the plea to relax these conditions. In recent days, the accused men have also invariably left their much-discussed “glass boxes” in the courtroom in protest against their treatment. They disrupted proceedings at the Justitia site in Haren where the trial is being held, leaving the courtroom to protest the conditions of their transfer from the prison to the courtroom each day. ‘If no one speaks, there can be no trial’



[Five of the ten defendants](#) – Salah Abdeslam, Sofien Ayari, Osama Krayem, Ali El Haddad Asufi and Mohamed Abrini – refused to stand as they are tried for the March 2016 bombings that claimed 32 lives at the Maelbeek metro station and Brussels Airport in Zaventem.

However, the president of the court has no say in what happens outside the courtroom, which is why the six accused have now sued Van Quickenborne in summary proceedings. Their lawyers demand an end to nude frisks and blindfolds if no specific justification is given beforehand. For each breach, they demand a penalty of €5,000.

A first hearing will reportedly take place next Monday (19 December) and the lawyers ask that their clients attend. In which court building the hearing will take place is not yet clear.

In the meantime, the trial on the terror attacks will continue

as normal, according to press magistrate Luc Hennart. The accused are under arrest and are therefore obliged to come to court (or stay in the cell if the police judge that the transfer cannot go ahead). Their lawyers, however, will have to reorganise so they can attend both trials, which they will have to do by sending an assistant, for example.

The Life4Brussels association that represents victims of the attacks has asked the Ministry of Justice to do all it can to “remedy the situation,” as it was “inconceivable that the defendants do not do not take part in the trial.”