

Utrecht tram shooter removed from court for spitting at lawyer as trial begins

From [terrorist attack on a commuter tram in Utrecht](#) was removed from the courtroom on the first day of his trial for spitting at a defence lawyer.

Gökmen Tanis refused to answer questions and raised his middle finger to the judges several times as the hearing got under way at the district court in Utrecht. He has admitted shooting dead four people but the court will have to decide whether to convict him of murder or manslaughter and whether the offences were of a terrorist nature.

When defence lawyer, André Seebregts, appointed by the court to represent Tanis after he refused to accept legal support, asked the judges to outline a psychiatric report slowly and in simple terms to the defendant, Tanis spat at him. The judges ordered him to be taken away to a side room where he followed the rest of the proceedings by video link.

The court was shown a digital reconstruction of the shootings on the morning of March 18, when Tanis opened fire on board the commuter tram on 24 Oktoberplein, near Utrecht central station. He then turned his gun on motorists who were stuck behind the tram, one of whom died after being shot through his windscreen. Tanis escaped in a Renault Clio that had been abandoned in the queue, but was arrested several hours later.

One of the first victims, a 19-year-old woman, was talking on her phone to her boss when she suddenly said: 'What the f***, I've been stabbed.' Another girl was shot in the back as she leapt from the tram. Several passengers heard Tanis shout 'Allahu Akbar' as he fired the shots. He left behind a note in the stolen car which said: 'I'm doing this for my belief. You

are killing Muslims. You want to take our belief away from us, but it won't work. Allah is great.'

Experts said he had become increasingly obsessed with his faith because of failures in his life, but did not see his crimes as being motivated by religious conviction and said he was a suitable case for psychiatric treatment. The hearings are due to continue until Friday, when prosecutors will submit their sentencing demands.