

Emanuel AME shooter will face death penalty

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([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) Charleston mayor Joseph P. Riley said in a news conference on June 19 that he had "no doubt" the death penalty would be sought in Dylann Roof's case, though he is personally "not a proponent of the death penalty." Documents filed Thursday indicate that Roof will indeed face the death penalty. He is expected in court again in October on charges relating to the violent attack on churchgoers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The documents said prosecutors would pursue the death penalty against Roof because more than two people were killed, and that others' lives were put at risk.

Prosecutors also said they intended to present evidence on Roof's mental state, his adult and juvenile criminal record and other conduct, and his apparent lack of remorse for the killings. Images of Roof being led into court depict him with a blank stare.

The tension in this scenario, interestingly enough, comes between those on the side of the shooter's family and the victims' families. Members of Roof's family have said that they want him to receive the strictest punishment possible, while the families of the victims immediately responded with forgiveness. "We already forgive him for what he's done, and there's nothing but love from our side of the family," teenager Chris Singleton told BBC News. Chris's mother, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, was one of those killed.

The decision to seek capital punishment in mass shootings often hinges on whether the crime is characterized as an "act of terrorism." Almost immediately after the shootings at Emanuel, the incident was declared a "hate crime." However, to many black Americans, that label did not go far enough.

Jelani Cobb, a writer for the *New Yorker* and director of the Institute for African American Studies at University of Connecticut, wrote in commentary that what

occurred in Charleston was a manifestation of white concern about blacks and other minorities are taking over the country, not in the least initially impelled by the election of a black man to the highest political office. Propagation of that fear constituted not only hate but also "an act of terror," in Cobb's view.

Roof is white and appeared in photos waving Confederate flags and burning or desecrating U.S. flags. He purportedly wrote online of fomenting racial violence, and federal authorities have said he used a personal manuscript in which he decried integration and used racial slurs to refer to blacks.

A federal indictment says Roof planned for months to increase racial tensions throughout the country and seek retribution for perceived wrongs he thought had been committed against white people.

And when it came to picking a target, he purposefully selected the historic church—a centuries-old religious institution rooted in South Carolina—"in order to make his attack more notorious," according to the indictment. Survivors told police he used racial insults during the attack.

Roof faces state charges including nine murder counts in the June 17 slayings at Emanuel AME.

He also faces federal charges including hate crimes and obstruction of the practice of religion, some of which are also eligible for the death penalty in that system. U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch has said federal charges were necessary to adequately address a motive that prosecutors believe was unquestionably rooted in racial hate. South Carolina has no state hate crimes law.

This report contains material from the Associated Press, as well as Mark Sappenfield and Harry Bruinius of The Christian Science Monitor.