US man sentenced to life in Germany for tourist rape-murder

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A German court handed an American man a life sentence Monday for raping and killing a fellow US tourist near Bavaria’s famed Neuschwanstein castle last year.  
  
  
  
The district tribunal in the southern town of Kempten convicted the defendant, identified only as Troy Philipp B., 31, after he made a wide-ranging confession on the first day of his trial last month.  
  
The judges also noted the “particular severity of guilt”, meaning he is unlikely to be released after 15 years as is customary with life sentences in Germany.  
  
Troy Philipp B. was convicted of raping and murdering the 21-year-old US woman as well as the attempted murder of her friend, 22, also a US citizen.  
  
The two women were hiking in the Neuschwanstein area in June last year at the end of a European trip that had taken them to Italy and Spain.  
  
  
  
The pair got speaking to the accused after he and the younger of the women slipped at a similar point on a mountain trail, prosecutors said.  
  
“That’s enough adventure for today,” B. is said to have remarked to the women, before offering to take them to a nearby viewing point on the way back to the castle.  
  
– ‘Deeply ashamed’ –  
  
At a secluded spot, the man, then 30, pushed the 21-year-old woman to the ground and proceeded to rape and strangle her, according to investigators.  
  
  
  
Her friend intervened, leading to a scuffle in which the accused pushed the 22-year-old down a steep, 50-metre (165-foot) slope.  
  
The suspect then continued his sexual assault of the 21-year-old woman, strangling her with a belt while filming the act.  
  
Interrupted by a pair of hikers who stumbled on the crime, he pushed the rape victim over the same ledge while she was unconscious.  
  
  
  
The 21-year-old landed at the bottom of the slope next to her friend, who called the emergency services, telling them her friend was “gasping”.  
  
When mountain rescue workers found the two women, the 22-year-old was injured but able to talk.  
  
The rape victim was seriously injured and taken by helicopter to hospital, where she died that night from her injuries.  
  
The defendant, who is from the US state of Michigan, admitted the crimes as the high-profile trial opened on February 19, with his lawyer telling the court he was “deeply ashamed” of his actions.  
  
  
  
B. also confessed to possession of child pornography, which investigators uncovered as part of their probe into the attack and said featured the accused’s younger sister.  
  
Presiding judge Christoph Schwiebacher said that the accused, who had no previous criminal record, had been motivated by a drive for sexual gratification “without concern for the consequences”.  
  
  
  
He noted his decision to record the assault with his phone was to “gratify himself again sexually”, calling the “unbelievably brutal” attack “ice cold”.  
  
Schwiebacher said the surviving victim was traumatised, noting she would continue to struggle for a long time with the impact of the crime.  
  
Built in the 19th century by King Ludwig II, Neuschwanstein castle is one of the most visited sites in Germany, attracting over a million visitors a year.