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Karachi Court Acquits Two in 1997 KESC Murder Case

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– Categories: Crime



An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Karachi has acquitted Minhaj Qazi, former security in-charge of the now-defunct Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) headquarters known as Nine Zero, and co-accused Mehboob Ghafran in the 1997 murder case of Shahid Hamid, the then Managing Director of Karachi Electric Supply Corporation (KESC).

The verdict was issued at the Anti-Terrorism Complex located inside Karachi Central Jail. The court ruled that the prosecution failed to produce sufficient evidence to establish the

involvement of Qazi and Ghafran in the crime, granting both men the benefit of the doubt and ordering their release.

The case stems from the targeted killing of Shahid Hamid, along with his driver Ashraf Brohi and guard Khan Akbar, in Karachi's Defence area on July 5, 1997. The murder initially led to the arrest and conviction of Saulat Mirza, an MQM worker, who was sentenced to death by an ATC in 1999. Mirza was executed in May 2015 at the Machh Jail in Balochistan.

Qazi and Ghafran were arrested in 2016, nearly two decades after the original conviction. Their arrests followed a renewed investigation into the case. However, defence lawyers argued that their implication was based on circumstantial evidence and lacked direct proof. According to the defence counsel, the First Information Report (FIR) only mentioned Saulat Mirza as being present in the car used during the attack. Qazi's name, the lawyer contended, did not appear in the original investigation and was later introduced without substantial supporting evidence.

A pivotal moment in the case was the testimony of Shahid Hamid's widow, Shahnaz Hamid. While her initial statement was used to support the prosecution's narrative, she later submitted a revised statement to the Supreme Court in 2016, shortly after Qazi's arrest. In the updated testimony, she clarified that she had not witnessed the murder herself, thereby weakening the prosecution's position.

The case, originally registered at the Defence Police Station, became one of Karachi's most politically charged and closely watched murder trials. Despite the seriousness of the allegations, the prosecution was unable to produce forensic, documentary, or eyewitness evidence directly linking Qazi and Ghafran to the crime.

With this ruling, the court concluded that the prosecution's case did not meet the legal standard required for conviction. Both men were declared not guilty and released from custody. The decision marks the end of a prolonged legal battle tied to one of the city's most high-profile political murder cases, though its legacy continues to stir public and political discussion.