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Valley Village slaying suspect was fed up with being disrespected, police say

Nerses Galstyan was apparently tired of being made to do menial tasks, LAPD officials say. He has been charged with four counts of capital murder.

By Richard Winton, Los Angeles Times

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A man charged Thursday with a quadruple killing at a Valley Village restaurant allegedly committed the crime because he was fed up with being disrespected by the victims, police said Thursday.

Nerses Arthur Galstyan, 28, and his brother, Samuel Galstyan, 24, were taken into custody Tuesday evening in the Seattle suburb of Kenmore, police said. They were staying at a home, but the owner was unaware that they were wanted in connection with the April 3 slayings, officials said.

Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck said during a news conference outside police headquarters downtown that Nerses Galstyan has been charged with four counts of capital murder and one of mayhem. He is expected to be arraigned on the charges Friday and is being held in lieu of \$4-million bail, Beck said.

Prosecutors could seek the death penalty in the case because of the capital murder charges in the case.

The two brothers were among a group of guests attending an afternoon celebration at the Hot Spot Mediterranean Restaurant in honor of a friend who had died in an accident a year earlier, police said. At one point, Nerses Galstyan allegedly began arguing with some of the men and then began shooting.

He was apparently tired of being humiliated and forced to do menial tasks, said Capt. Kevin McClure of the LAPD's Robbery-Homicide Division. Nerses Galstyan was captured on surveillance video leaving the restaurant after the shooting, McClure said.

Hayk Yegnanyan, 25; Sarkis Karadjian, 26; Harut Baburyan, 28; and Vardan Tofalyan, 31, were killed in the shooting, police said. Two other men were wounded.

Some of the men had allegedly been active in organized crime and gun running and had convictions for fraud and weapons violations, police said. But the shooting evolved from a personal dispute, police said.

Both brothers were arrested on a murder warrant by U.S. Marshals.

But prosecutors and police say Samuel Galstyan will be released because police do not have sufficient evidence to keep him in custody.

"We are still looking at his involvement," Beck told reporters.

Samuel Galstyan was inside the restaurant when the shootings occurred, McClure said. "We believe he was substantially involved," he said. Detectives have yet to recover the weapon used in the killings, he added.

LAPD detectives and U.S. Marshals tracked the pair to the Seattle area. The home where they were staying was one of several locations that federal authorities had under surveillance.

In addition to the murder charges, a federal grand jury in Los Angeles has indicted Nerses Galstyan on separate charges of selling firearms without a license and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number. He and one of the victims, Tofalyan, last year allegedly sold illegal firearms to an informant working for federal agents.