



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

Woolwich Crown Court

R v DARREN OSBORNE

02 February 2018

Sentencing Remarks

1. Darren Osborne you have been convicted on overwhelming evidence by an intelligent British jury who saw through your pathetic last-ditch attempt to deceive them by blaming someone else for your crimes. On 17th June 2017 you hired a big heavy van and the next day you took it from Cardiff to London intending to deploy it as a lethal weapon to drive into and murder innocent people, lawfully assembling and protesting in London. You told the jury you intended to “plough through as many of them as possible”. But you failed in that endeavour because you could not get your van near the march. There is no doubt at all that the detailed public safety arrangements made by the Metropolitan Police for the Al Qud’s Day march saved many lives.
2. Frustrated and angry you drove around London for hours looking for an alternative target. At midnight you ended up in north London near the Finsbury Park Mosque. The streets were busy with people of many races, going about their normal lives in a vibrant part of the capital city. It was the month of Ramadan and many of those in the area had broken their fasts and were coming from prayers. Eventually you saw a crowd of people who had gathered around to help a man collapsed on the ground in the entrance to a cul-de-sac. Many of them were wearing in distinctive Islamic dress. You had found your target. You accelerated the van towards them intending to kill as many people as you could. The fact that traffic was stopped at lights just before the side road where the crowd was and you had to cross a bus-lane meant that you were able to reach no more than about 16 miles an hour before you struck them.
3. Over twelve innocent members of the public struck and injured. Makram Ali who was lying on the ground was run over with the tyre-marks left on his torso. He died immediately because internally his heart was severed from vital vessels.
4. The diversity of the group you tried to kill is striking: there were young people, old people, a group of deaf people, at least one man using a wheel-chair was struck and thrown from it. You hit men and women. But the reason you attacked them was because you identified them as Muslims from their mode of dress. As is clear from their moving Victim Personal Statements, all of which I have read, the medical and emotional impact of your actions have had a severe and lasting effect on those you hit. Some sustained life changing injuries. Some spent weeks in hospital. One of those was Mr Hamid Al-Faiq who was hit by

the van and trapped underneath it. When they heard his cries for help people, some of whom had also been struck in the attack, rushed to free him. He came to court presenting some of the lasting consequences of your brutal actions, having undergone major surgery for complex fractures and subsequently having to overcome a pulmonary embolism. Another victim, Mr Ibrahim Benaounda suffered spinal and pelvic fractures as well as injuries to his spleen and renal artery.

5. Makram Ali was aged 51. He has been described as a sincere and warm person who was always full of laughter and immense love for his family. He lived his life without enemies until, unknowingly, he met you. He left behind a wife, six children and two grandchildren. Their hearts have been shattered by his loss and the circumstances in which he died. Many of those who have written statements speak of the fear they feel for themselves and their children of being attacked in the streets simply because they are visibly Muslims.
6. Who are you Darren Osborne? You are 48 years of age and have four children. You have not worked for 10 years. You abused alcohol. You were described as a loner and nondescript. You took medication for depression. You have 102 criminal convictions acquired from your youth onwards. They include offences of public disorder and violence, including assaulting the police. You have experienced youth custody and sentences of imprisonment. Over the years you have been given help to reform with probation and community rehabilitation order but your response was often to breach those orders. Your record reflects a belligerent and violent character. Aged 36 for an offence of GBH with intent you received an extended sentence.
7. Having presided over your trial I am sure of the following facts:
 - a. During May 2017 you watched a BBC drama-documentary: Three Girls which told the true story of the grooming and sexual abuse of young girls in Rochdale by British-Pakistani Muslim men. You became incensed by what you believed to be the inadequate response of political leaders and other authorities to such criminal conduct. Your research and joining Twitter early in June 2017 exposed you to a great deal of extreme racist and anti-Islamic ideology.
 - b. You were rapidly radicalised over the internet encountering and consuming material put out in this country and the USA from those determined to spread hatred of Muslims on the basis of their religion. The terrorist atrocities perpetrated by extremist Islamists fuelled your rage. Over the space of a month or so your mind-set became one of malevolent hatred. You allowed your mind to be poisoned by those who claim to be leaders.
 - c. You were inspired to carry out an attack on innocent members of the public but the section of the public you chose would reflect your ideology of hate towards Muslims. Over a weekend in mid-June you acted to kill, maim, injure and terrify as many people as you could. You targeted the Al Qud's march because Muslims would be congregating

there and from your research you believed that the leader of the Labour Party was due to attend and the Mayor of London may also have been there. In evidence you described the prospect of killing both of those men in your attack as being 'like winning the lottery.'

- d. Your plan was simple. To copy the method used by some Islamist terrorist and take a vehicle to a densely populated place and wreak as much devastation as possible as well as sowing long-lasting terror among the Muslim population. Along the way you had many opportunities to change your mind. Your partner Sarah Andrews who described you as a 'ticking time-bomb' challenged your views, your own daughter who has Muslim school friends argued with you and, in the end stopped bringing her friends home, Sapper Callum Spence, a serving soldier challenged you when you were shouting out things like, "All Muslims are terrorists", "I'm going to kill all the Muslims" in the pub the night before you set off for London. You ignored all the good sense of those people.
 - e. Yours was a suicide mission. You expected to be shot dead by the police, as you knew the terrorists who committed the London Bridge attack had been. You wrote a suicide note the night before driving to London. In it you set out in foul language your twisted view of Muslims said that you wanted peaceful vigils. I am not going to repeat those things in court.
 - f. After your arrest you celebrated and smiled. You said while you were being restrained: "I've done my job, you can kill me now." You shouted at some of those holding you, "I want to kill you, I want to kill more Muslims." You were sober as the police breath test after your arrest demonstrated but even in the police van you continued your ranting saying, "At least I had a fucking proper go". You made frank admissions later, "I accelerated a big van for about 20ft into people." You admitted you were on your own, to use your words, "flying solo."
 - g. This was a terrorist attack. You intended to kill.
8. The sentence for murder is mandatory: it is life imprisonment. I must set the minimum term you must serve.
 9. As I have made clear this was (in the terms of paragraph 4(c) of Schedule 21 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003) a murder done for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause. Equally, and in accordance with the provisions of the Counter Terrorism Act 2008, this was a murder with a terrorist connection, which is an aggravating feature. It is accepted on your behalf that this is so.
 10. The seriousness of your offences is exceptionally high and the just requirements of punishment and retribution mean that a very substantial minimum term must be imposed. But you did not succeed in committing multiple murders and so this is not one of those rare cases in which the sentence of last resort; a whole life order, is necessary. I take a starting point of

30 years for the minimum term but it must be increased from the starting point to reflect the aggravating features I have identified and the fact that the one murder was in the context of an attempt to murder many.

11. The maximum sentence for attempted murder is life imprisonment.
12. As required s.172 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 I have considered the Sentencing Council Guideline for offences of Attempted Murder. To those you did not manage to kill you caused differing degrees of harm including serious and long term physical and psychological harm. I bear in mind the number of murders you intended to commit, the associated offence of murder, and the terrorist nature of the offending while avoiding double-counting and having regard to the principle of totality. This means that when sentencing for more than one offence a judge must pass an overall sentence which is proportionate and just.
13. You attempted to kill at least a dozen people and succeeded in taking the life of a peaceful man you knew nothing about and had never met. You acted alone. You had not been radicalised over a long period of time but your rapid decline into irrational hatred of all Muslims turned you a danger to the public. The court has seen no evidence that the danger you present has lessened; indeed, your conduct and language in court exposes your unreformed attitude and lack of insight. You will pose a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission of further serious specified violent offences for a very long time: perhaps for the rest of your life.
14. There is no mitigation in your case because although you were radicalised within a short period of time you have had much longer than that to see the error of your ways but you steadfastly refuse to do so and even in the grave atmosphere of a criminal trial, before a jury of your fellow countrymen, you repeated your perverted hatred of Muslims.
15. Accordingly, I pass a discretionary life sentence for the offence of attempted murder pursuant to s.225 Criminal Justice Act 2003.
16. I will pass the same minimum term on each offence to reflect the totality of your offending.
17. I therefore pass concurrent life sentences for these two offences. The appropriate minimum term for this terrorist murder in the context of an attempt at multiple murder is 43 years. The days you have spent on remand must be deducted resulting in a minimum term of 43 years minus 224 days.
18. The notification requirements apply to you for 30 years.

19. The victim surcharge must be paid.
20. I would like to commend the excellent way the evidence has been presented & the hard work of the advocates on both sides.
21. The court also commends the officer in the case Detective Sergeant Kevin Martin whose commitment and professionalism has been evident in the way the case has been investigated, particularly when near the end of the Crown's case the defendant challenged his identification as the driver of the van at the crucial time. The agile and rapid response he led mean that the time-table of the trial was not derailed but the issue raised was properly investigated and met. He also oversaw the preparation of high quality materials for the jury.
22. Finally, the court commends Mohammed Mahmoud, Imam of the Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park. Having been captured while trying to run away after the attack Darren Osborne was in some danger from an angry crowd of about one hundred people but the Imam told them to leave him alone. To not seek vengeance; to allow the law to take its course. As it has done. This was a demonstration of true leadership. His behaviour throws into sharp relief the bile spewed out on-line from those who aspire to lead the haters. Not because his exhortation to desist from punishing the perpetrator was remarkable but because he had the strength of character to do the right thing under pressure. He chose to respond to evil with good. His response should be everyone's response whether it is to the evil of child grooming and abuse in Rochdale or the evil of terrorist atrocities in our cities.

Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb
2nd February 2018