



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

Regina –v- Mohammed Abdul

Sentencing Remarks at Maidstone Crown Court

10th January 2019

1. Mohammed Abdul, you have been convicted by the jury on the clearest evidence, of attempting to kill entirely innocent people at Blakes Nightclub, Queen Street in Gravesend, Kent on 17th March 2018. Your motive was selfish and pathetic: it was revenge at being thrown out for being drunk. You were a customer at the club yourself that evening. You had pre-loaded yourself with alcohol and drugs; drinking five vodka and cokes and smoking a similar number of cannabis joints with a friend before even arriving.
2. You then drove from your family home in Greenwich to Gravesend. You did so unlawfully; you had only a provisional driving licence, there were no L plates on the Suzuki Vitara vehicle, and, of course, you had been drinking. You and a friend wanted to see a well-known rapper who was booked to perform at the club. The owner was expecting 600 people that night. He had hired a large number of additional members of staff. There was an efficient and effective body of door staff and security.
3. You arrived shortly after the club opened, at around 8.30pm. In the next 3 hours you consumed, by your own account, an ‘excessive’ amount of alcohol: you estimated it was 15 vodka and cokes mixed in with tequila shots. You were drunk on the dance-floor. You were asked to leave. Once outside you remonstrated with the staff. CCTV footage shows the state you were in. You were not violent, but you didn’t want to leave. Security staff directed you, perfectly properly, out of the premises. By the time you were moved into Queen Street you were enraged and felt humiliated. As you left you threatened to return and close the club down. You told a man to watch what you would do. One man heard you issue a threat to kill. By this time 400 people had been admitted to Blake’s and you must have known that the club was very busy.
4. You walked a short distance to where you had parked the car. You boldly told the jury that you had intended to drive home, despite the amount you had had to drink. You didn’t drive home though, you turned out of the side-street, and drove towards to club. You pulled up alongside an opening to the alleyway where customers queued up to be searched and gain entry to the club. There

you challenged the door staff. Then, in several deliberate manoeuvres you reversed your car so that you could get it into the narrow alleyway itself. The space was not much wider than the car. Although one member of door staff frantically tried to stop you, by opening the driver's door and grabbing hold of you, you ploughed forward, into the alleyway which was full of people.

5. This was not a short piece of dangerous driving, you went along the alleyway, you paused and put on your brake lights at least once, perhaps twice. But you continued. You drove straight through a set of metal gates which were bolted, you admitted speeding up to get through them. You hit gas bottles and an outdoor heater. You were then in an area where people who had been admitted to the club were smoking.
6. The CCTV from the alleyway shows how desperately your intended victims fled from the oncoming vehicle. It could have been a scene of carnage. Your inebriated state, together with the bravery of the door staff, who pushed and pulled people out of your way, combined to avoid the multiple deaths which were your aim.
7. At the end of the alleyway was a permanent marquee, containing a dance floor and a bar as well as seating areas. You had been in that area earlier in the evening, so you knew it was there and that there would be many people inside it. You drove up the ramp to the entrance. You hesitated there for nine seconds before driving your car into the crowd. The footage of this part of your offending is simply shocking. Unsuspecting young people were thrown aside or swept along by your car. One young woman, only 18 years of age, was dragged under the vehicle and run over by it. She could so easily have been killed. The serious injuries she suffered included pelvic fractures which have long term consequences and may render her infertile. You have robbed that young lady of future choices and have also had a profound impact on her psychological health. A photographer who was working that night waiting for the main act to come on and who tried to calm you down as you left the club, was also hit, pinned against the marquee structure when you reversed at speed before driving forwards again. He suffered a broken knee and broken shin. Others have been psychologically affected long after their less serious physical injuries have healed.
8. The door staff and security guards who had chased your car down the alleyway and into the marquee were finally able to get into it, secure the keys and prevent you from doing any more damage. Your action had led to panic and distress among dozens of people. You were the target of abuse and violence from frightened customers. The security guards protected you from it. At trial you lied to the jury and pretended that you had only driven your car in the dangerous way shown by the evidence because you had been fleeing an attack by those same door staff. That was a shameful attempt to escape the consequences of your actions.
9. Who are you Mohammed Abdul? You are just 21 years of age. You have 8 GCSEs so you are not without intelligence. You have a supportive family;

your father has been at this trial. You have no previous convictions but have been cautioned on two occasions in the past for criminal damage and possessing cannabis. Your actions on 17th March 2018 have thrown away many of the best years of your own life.

10. I must have regard to the sentencing guideline for offences of attempted murder and also to what part of the Schedule 21 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003 would have been engaged, had you succeeded in your attempt to murder. There are two offences. It is conceded on your behalf that this is a Level 1 case. I am satisfied that you have caused serious and long term physical or psychological harm to at least one of those injured. The starting point for sentence is therefore 30 years imprisonment. Your intention was to kill at least one person but many lives were deliberately endangered because you targeted a crowded location. You caused some degree of injury to eight people and you plainly intended more serious harm than actually resulted. Some of those you targeted were working to keep people safe. You used a car as a weapon, you did not engage in a short period of driving but a sustained period when you had many opportunities to stop. You were drunk and under the influence of drugs.
11. Being careful not to double-count for any of these features, the provisional sentence I reach is one of 32 years imprisonment. On the other hand I take into account your age and lack of maturity which was apparent when you gave evidence. This mitigation enables me to reduce the sentence to some extent.
12. There will be no separate penalty for the two offences of Causing Serious Injury by Dangerous Driving to which you pleaded guilty, but you will be disqualified from driving for 2 years which has to be extended because of the sentence of imprisonment I must pass, to 16 years. You are also disqualified until you have passed an extended test.
13. The sentence I pass on counts 1 and 2 concurrently is one of 28 years' imprisonment. You will serve half that sentence. I am unable to make any compensation orders due to your circumstances.
14. I wish to commend the courage and commitment of the door staff concerned, in particular Peter Muro, Greg Perzanowski, Bharat Vara, Liam Vine, Awais Farrukh, Christopher Wildish, Norbert Mizigar and Janusz Fusniak. Some of these men suffered injuries themselves but each acted selflessly in trying to stop the defendant and to save lives. Some of them kept him safe from the frightened and angry crowd afterwards. In an unexpected crisis they kept their heads and did their jobs with credit. The court commends them all.

Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb DBE