



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

MRS JUSTICE CHEEMA-GRUBB DBE

R v Zahid Younis

Southwark Crown Court

Sentencing Remarks

1. It will surprise no one in this court room that the defendant has declined to attend his sentence. He sits in the cells below but I will address these remarks to him so that when he has the courage to read them he will know exactly why the court reached the conclusions that it did.
2. Henriett Szucs was aged 32 when you murdered her in November 2016. She was a mother with three children in her native Hungary. Mihrican Mustafa was aged 37 when you murdered her in May 2018. She had two children who she saw regularly.
3. Both of these women fell into your orbit when they were at a low ebb in their lives. Henriett Szucs was in hospital having survived an attempt on her life by an abusive boyfriend who threw her out of a fifth-floor window. You were attentive and charming to her. She thought she could rely on you to take her away from the sadness of her old life. She made a fatal mistake leaving the place in a safe house she had been given in Bristol, to move back to London thinking her new boyfriend, you, would look after her. You knew her history; she was a fragile and malleable companion. She left behind writings and drawings she made over the eight or so months she lived with you, expressing her love for you, her reliance on you and her hope that she would find a refuge and true happiness with you. But you repaid her devotion with control, with humiliation and with violence. The marks you left on her body testify to your remorseless cruelty. What she wrote at the end, demonstrates her broken spirit.
4. The pathologist could not determine very much about how you had treated that trusting woman but she had suffered fractures to all but one of her ribs. The ensuing pain, from two weeks before she died, is something she would not have been able to hide and yet you told the

jury you didn't notice it. It is not possible to say how she actually died, a frenzy of stamping could have caused the rib fractures and she had also sustained many recent wounds to her head which would have bled heavily, but the jury is sure that you inflicted serious violence on her causing her death. Eighteen months later, you did it again.

5. Mihrican Mustafa's mother saw her last in the days before she was murdered by you. The picture she painted, of a desperately pathetic woman, begging for money to spend on drugs while her mother tried to make her pounds stretch for the rest of the week so she could feed her grandchildren, is one that no one who heard the trial will forget. She was addicted to drugs and was in desperate straits when you drew her into your flat in which you had already concealed the body of Henriett, over a year earlier. Mihrican needed someone to help her find a way out of her self-destructive life. But she came across you instead. And, after securing her trust, you killed her.
6. Again, because of the state of her body when it was found and examined, it is impossible to know exactly what you did but it looks likely that you strangled her, crushing her voice-box, fracturing it in three places, fracturing some of her ribs and delivering that shocking tear to her liver. You then put her body into the same place you had hidden Henriett.
7. And who are you Zahid Younis? You are thirty-five years old. You are an arch deceiver. You have spent a lifetime destroying lives. From your teenage years when you flattered impressionable young girls and tried to control them, until their families rescued them from you, to the malicious and destructive relationships you had with your own children, you have preyed upon the vulnerable with superficial charm.
8. You have been convicted by a strong prosecution case. Not only were the bodies of two women found in your home, hidden in a locked freezer you had purchased for the purpose, they bore signs of violence and you failed to explain how they had sustained it. Three of the women who you ruined had the courage to step into the witness box and tell their stories. You know what you did to them too, and your history of previous convictions including penetrative sexual activity with a child and wounding one of them, illustrates it; although in this courtroom you showed yourself adept at spinning a series of stories that laid the blame back at their doors. Against that background your late and sophisticated, but ultimately incredible, explanations for how Miss Szucs and Miss Mustafa died were exposed as false.

9. You are a heartless man and a narcissist. Your concern throughout has been for yourself. Your selfishness is neatly illustrated by the fact that while both women's bodies were in your freezer and you were receiving over £1000 a month in social security benefits, you tricked your 91 year old neighbour into letting you go to her kitchen from where you stole £60 she had saved in a jam-jar.
10. You robbed Henriett Szucs and Mihrican Mustafa, two beautiful and creative women, of happiness in life and dignity in death. The impact statements I have read speak of the gaps those women have left in the lives of others. Because of the restrictions on international travel Henriett's family were not able to leave Hungary to attend this trial. They have despaired that she lay forgotten and un-missed for two and a half years. The jury heard how Mihrican's family searched for her as soon as she went missing and didn't give up hope until they had to. You have deprived five children of any prospect of the comfort of their mothers' presence in their lives. Your conduct since arrest has been characterised by ducking and diving to avoid the import of the evidence. You were described during the trial as clever and manipulative; an apt portrait. You went through three Queen's Counsel before this trial began and you tried to manipulate the court by withdrawing instructions and refusing to leave prison. You didn't succeed in any of this and you will receive no increase to your sentence for having fought your trial. What this behaviour does illustrate, is that you have no remorse.
11. The sentence for murder is life imprisonment. The court must set the minimum term, every day of which you have to serve in custody before the Parole Board can consider whether it is safe to release you. I have to set that term by reference to the general principles encapsulated in Schedule 21 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003. I have considered carefully whether a whole life order is necessary. Such orders are the most severe sentence available in this jurisdiction and mark a few exceptionally grave cases in which the elements of punishment and retribution require the imposition of a sentence from which there is no possible release. I have concluded the correct minimum term should be fixed in light of paragraph 5(1)&(2). The normal starting point for a particularly serious case of murder, including multiple murders, is 30 years. Courts look for all relevant features including any mitigation, whenever it is necessary to sentence an offender. In your case I find aggravating features in the way you targeted those women, exploiting their obvious vulnerability. Also, in

their entirely separate murders over a year apart. In Henriett's case I can be sure that there was prolonged, terrible physical suffering before her death and given the broad range of injuries, the likely period over which they were inflicted and how closely the overall pattern matched your previous sadistic violence towards a previous girlfriend, I am sure that you kept that woman a virtual prisoner in your flat and took pleasure in her suffering. I cannot be sure that there was a sexual element to her murder which is something over which you gain the benefit of doubt which may have been caused by your own actions in the way you allowed her body to decompose but I have to apply a high standard of proof and despite the fact that she was found without any clothing on her upper body, I am not sure of a sexual motive. Given the degree of injury to Mihrican, I am sure you intended to kill her too. Finally, how you concealed their bodies, keeping their families from knowing where they were or mourning their passing. I look, but in vain, for mitigation. Your medical condition will be managed in prison. It did not prevent you murdering your victims and hiding them away. I see no reason why it should count to mitigate the sentence.

12. You have spent 490 days in custody and that period will be deducted from the minimum term I set. As to the counts of preventing unlawful burial the punishment is subsumed into the minimum term for the murders. Had they stood alone the aggravating features would have been the length of time of the concealment, that you killed Mihrican Mustafa in the same place where Henriett had already died and where her body was hidden, you caused particular anguish to the family of Mihrican Mustafa and you stored the bodies in a flat where you were regularly visited by and questioned by the police. Your intention was to prevent an investigation into the deaths in which you would have been implicated. Despite being caught red-handed you didn't make early admissions, taking over a year after arrest to indicate guilty pleas, but I bring down the sentence by a fifth as required. The sentence is notional given the verdicts on the murder counts and but for those convictions the sentences would have been consecutive to each other. The sentence is 5 years imprisonment on each, concurrent to the sentence for murder. On the two counts of murder the sentence is life imprisonment with concurrent minimum term of 38 years minus 490 days. Therefore, the formal order of the court is that the minimum term from this day onwards is 36 years and 240 days, and the relevant statutory surcharge will apply. You should clearly understand that the minimum term which you will serve for murdering Henriett Szucs and Mihrican Mustafa is 38 years in custody. You may never be released; that will only occur if and when

the Parole Board is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that you should be confined. Even if eventually released, you will remain on licence and subject to recall to prison to continue serving these life sentences, for the remainder of your life.

13. The court wishes to recognise and thank the jury for the conspicuous care with which they have carried out their jury service and to express its appreciation to the court staff at Southwark Crown Court for all they have done to ensure a safe trial has been held. The police are commended for their thorough investigation. All counsel in this case have carried out their duties with particular care and expertise; a credit to the profession.

3rd September 2020