



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

IN THE CROWN COURT AT TEESSIDE

REX -v- AHMED ALI ALID

SENTENCING

On 7 October 2023 a terrorist group called Hamas, which is proscribed in this country under the Terrorism Act 2000, carried out an attack on southern Israel. Many hundreds of people were killed and over two hundred taken hostage. There was widespread media coverage of these events, and of the armed response of the state of Israel against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which also led to many, many deaths. Just a week later, shortly after 5am on 15 October Ahmed Ali Alid armed himself with two knives from his kitchen and tried to kill Javed Nouri, a Muslim convert to Christianity, while shouting out in Arabic "*Allahu Akbar*" (Allah is the greatest.) Then he went out into the street and murdered a complete stranger, Terence Carney, an 70 year old Englishman taking an early morning walk. He was arrested shortly afterwards, still in possession of the bloodstained knife he had used to stab Mr Carney and with the blood of Mr Nouri on his clothing.

He thought he had killed both men and he told the police he wanted to kill them because of the conflict in Gaza and so that Palestine would be free from "Zionists". He made references to historical links between Britain and Israel. He said he would have killed many more people if he had been able to, because so many innocents were being killed in Gaza. At the end of the police interview he struggled with the two female interviewing officers and assaulted them.

Ahmed Alid did not have the courage to acknowledge his guilt in court. He tried to persuade the jury that when he stabbed Mr Nouri and Mr Carney he hadn't intended to kill them or even cause them serious harm. He pretended that the admissions and explanations he gave to the police had been mis-translated by an interpreter, and the political and religious causes he had cited were not his actual motivation. The men and women on the jury saw through these lies. The evidence against him was overwhelming. He was convicted on 25 April 2024 after a two week trial. Sentence was adjourned so that the court had the fullest information and argument before proceeding.

The only sentence a court can pass for murder is life imprisonment.

The court must then determine whether to fix a minimum term and if it does, what the term will be or, by not fixing a minimum term, impose a whole life order which would mean that the offender is likely never to be released. If fixing a minimum term it must take into account such matters as the seriousness of the combination of the offence of murder and any offences associated with it. In this case I must sentence for murder, attempted murder and two offences of assaulting an emergency worker in the execution of her duty.

Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020 is the relevant legislation from which the correct starting point for the minimum term of a life sentence for murder must be identified. The first issue is whether, as the prosecution assert, the seriousness of the murder alone or in

combination with the attempted murder, is exceptionally high, such that the starting point is a whole life order. It is argued on the Defendant's behalf that the seriousness is not exceptionally high. Rather, it is either particularly high or to be assessed on the basis of a knife being taken to the scene and used to kill.

A second issue is the submission on the Defendant's behalf that there is mitigation to be found in lack of any significant premeditation, the absence of typical terrorist mindset evidence, his previous good character and a mental condition he had at the time. This has been diagnosed by a consultant psychiatrist as an adjustment disorder.

The jury's verdicts do not provide the answers on these issues because they were not asked to determine the Defendant's motives, which were not any part of the ingredients of the offences charged. Like the jury, a judge must apply the criminal burden and standard of proof when determining the basis upon which to pass sentence. Any doubt must be resolved in favour of the Defendant.

Having presided over the trial and read the psychiatric reports provided to the court after the convictions, I am sure of the following facts.

1. Ahmed Ali Alid speaks Arabic and some English. He is 45 years old having been born in Morocco in 1979. He gave evidence that he ran a business in Algeria before leaving that country in 2007. He has no history of mental illness. Late in 2020 he travelled by ferry from Holland to England. He had no lawful right to enter the country. He was not challenged by Border Force personnel but at some stage afterwards he was arrested. He told the jury that he came to Britain to find work. However, after his arrest he applied for asylum claiming that he could not return to Algeria because criminals who falsely believed he had reported them to the police would harm him. He told a psychiatrist Dr Mark Turner who interviewed him in December 2023 and again in March 2024 before the trial, that he came to Europe in search of a better life for himself. He tried to get work in several European countries, without success and before arriving in England he had sought, and failed to obtain, asylum in Spain, France, Germany and elsewhere. Police enquires establish that he had been detained in immigration detention in the Netherlands, on the Swiss/French border and in Germany where he had spent at least three periods of time. No decision was made on his claim by the Home Office until after he had been charged with these offences. His application for asylum was refused on 3 November 2023.

2. Meanwhile, in 2021 he was allocated a room in a house in Wharton Terrace, Hartlepool a port-town in County Durham, where other asylum seekers were living. Ahmed Alid was devout, chaste and teetotal. He prayed five times a day, ate only halal food, and took part in communal prayer in a mosque. He stayed in touch with his family by phone. The Counter-Terrorism Command investigation has found no evidence in his social media, phone records or elsewhere, of any links to, or communication with, any extremist Islamist individuals or groups.

3. On 5 August 2023 Javed Nouri a 31 year old man from Iran who had converted to Christianity moved into the house. He spoke Farsi and was learning English. He and the Defendant were not on good terms, from the start. He remonstrated with the Defendant for his lack of cleanliness and this led to resentment on the Defendant's part. Mr Nouri upset the Defendant by other behaviour including using the shared fridge to store beer which he considered disrespectful. Although they didn't speak the same language Mr Nouri realised that the Defendant was extreme in his religion and considered him, Mr Nouri, an apostate, one

who had voluntarily denounced Islam. In some Muslim majority countries apostasy is a criminal offence, sometimes punishable with the death penalty.

4. The Defendant would curse both Mr Nouri and another resident who he thought behaved in a way that was “*haram*” (forbidden) in Islam such as inviting a girlfriend into the house. He was heard saying that they were the devil, that Allah should damn them. Unlike the other residents, Mr Nouri, a physically large, strong man, was not afraid to confront and argue with the Defendant, or make light about his fastidiousness with food and conduct. Another man who sometimes stayed in the house as a guest told the jury that the Defendant thought of them as ‘garbage’.

5. After Israel declared war against Hamas on 8 October and announced a siege of Gaza the next day, Mr Nouri became concerned because he saw the Defendant watching footage on his mobile phone of what Mr Nouri called ‘terrorist’ news. He was laughing and praising Allah when the footage showed that Hamas had killed children and women. Mr Nouri noticed that the Defendant would keep a knife out when he was in the kitchen even if he wasn’t using one. Mr Nouri contacted friends at the local church, the charity Migration Help and those responsible for managing the accommodation to tell them that he thought his life and those of the others in the house were in danger. His instincts were right.

6. He was advised to go to the police which he did. After that, the accommodation staff visited and told the Defendant that if he carried on behaving as he was he would be asked to leave. They were satisfied that the Defendant would heed the warning. When Mr Nouri went back to the police by arrangement on 13 October, he was prepared to trust the defendant would change and the police concluded it was a matter for those responsible for the house to manage.

7. By this time, of course the armed forces of Israel were carrying out military action in Gaza and warning people to evacuate. It is clear from thumbnail images found later on the Defendant’s phone that he had viewed distressing media output of the conflict. This was mainstream and YouTube footage. He had also heard that his mother was ill.

8. The evening of the following day, 14 October Mr Nouri noticed the Defendant watching him when he returned to his room after a bath. At around midnight the friend who sometimes stayed overnight, and who understood some Arabic, arrived at the house and heard the Defendant shouting and swearing in the corridor, about religion. He was saying, “*these shameless, faithless people. I hope God puts them in hell, in the deepest part of hell.*”

9. Several hours later, at around 5am on 15 October Javed Nouri was asleep with the door to his room locked. The Defendant went into the kitchen, took out two knives and broke into Mr Nouri’s bedroom. He attacked Mr Nouri, stabbing him twice in the chest and shouting “*Allahu Akbar*”. Mr Nouri woke up and fought him. One of the knives was broken in the attack and fell to the floor. When tested later, the blade bore DNA matching that of Mr Nouri. It was dark and he was terrified, but knew he had to resist and overpower the Defendant, who then tried to stab him in the neck, catching his mouth. In the struggle he managed to wound Mr Nouri in the leg causing him to collapse. The victim screamed to rouse the others in the house. He got hold of the Defendant in a headlock and disarmed him of the knife he still had. In response the Defendant punched him in the head and tried to find the other knife, continually shouting out “*Allahu Akbar*”. The struggle and the Defendant’s words, were caught on the 999 call made from the house.

10. Mr Nouri managed to pass the knife he had got hold of to one of the other men, who threw it into the hallway before running upstairs to hide from the Defendant until the police arrived.

11. Despite feeling faint from a significant loss of blood, Javed Nouri held onto the Defendant until he was able to manoeuvre him out of his room. Even then, Ahmed Alid picked up the knife that had been thrown away in the hall and tried to get back into Mr Nouri's room. He prevented this by putting his weight against the door from the inside. Javed Nouri sustained two wounds to his chest and wounds to his lip, thigh and calf as well as cuts to his back and a finger, and bruising to his head. I am sure that the Defendant waited to assault him until he was asleep and vulnerable.

12. Mercifully, the attempt to kill Javed Nouri was unsuccessful. When armed police eventually entered the house and found him, he had low blood pressure due to severe blood loss and his condition was potentially life-threatening although the Defendant had failed to strike any vital organs or cause internal bleeding. The life Mr Nouri had started to build in this country was shattered by what happened. He has had to move to another part of England, he has lost proximity to his friends and community links. He has been left with psychological injury. He says, *"All my thoughts...of 'here' being a safe country have gone... I would expect to be arrested and possibly executed for converting to Christianity in my home country. I did not expect to be attacked in my sleep here."*

13. Returning to 15 October, Mr Terence Carney was a local man from Hartlepool who enjoyed walking in the peace of the early mornings. He was someone of quiet habits, strongly connected to his wife and daughter who miss him deeply. Their powerful impact statements remind the court that the Defendant's random targeting of a lone man in the street has touched many lives, and more than one generation. The sentence I pass whatever it is, is incapable of undoing the harm the Defendant has caused that family. No period of incarceration would be equivalent to the life he has taken and that is not the purpose of sentencing.

14. After being thwarted in his murderous attempt on Mr Nouri, the Defendant walked out of the house and down the road. He held the knife in his hand and was captured on cctv footage holding it up in the air. As he walked along he continued saying '*Allahu Akbar*'. After just a few minutes he approached Mr Carney who saw him and crossed the road to avoid him. What happened is recorded on cctv footage. The Defendant went over to him still holding the knife. He confronted Mr Carney who gestured that he didn't want to engage with him. Ahmed Alid then attacked that unarmed, elderly man who was unable to defend himself.

15. I am sure that the Defendant gave a deliberately false account in evidence and to the psychiatrist, about what happened between him and Mr Carney. He said to the jury that he was walking along saying, *"Free Palestine"* and in response Mr Carney made a pejorative and racist remark to him. He told the psychiatrist that upon hearing this he felt as if Mr Carney was responsible for Israel's actions in Gaza and reacted by stabbing him, but only in the leg, at which Mr Carney fell to the ground and said, *"Israel, Israel"* at which the defendant left. I am sure from the CCTV footage and medical evidence that as soon as Mr Carney saw the knife and tried to get away, the Defendant attacked him stabbing him repeatedly in the body. The knife he used had a 20cm blade. At one point during the assault he dropped the knife but picked it up again to continue stabbing his victim. When the injured Mr Carney fell the Defendant got himself into a position so that when he got up again he could strike him again in the chest. Cries are heard on the footage and it is likely that Mr Carney was begging,

"Please, please" which is what the Defendant told the police in his interview. But he showed him no mercy. He left him lying on the road.

16. Mr Carney was treated by emergency services but all efforts to save his life were futile and he died on the road-side, close to where he had been left. He had sustained six stab wounds and a number of other injuries in the attack. He died of massive internal bleeding caused by three of the wounds which had pierced his lung, his liver and his heart.

17. The Defendant was arrested within 20 minutes of the attack, with the knife in his waistband. He had injured his own hands with the knives he wielded.

18. At the police station he made unsolicited comments, in Arabic directly into an officer's body worn camera, stating that he had acted for the people of Gaza and "*inshallah*" (God-willing) Gaza would return to being an Arab country. He was agitated and had to be told to sit down. Among prayers praising Allah and condemning those who do not believe or who stray from Allah, he said that had his hands not been injured he would have continued what he called the "*ghazwa*" (a battle or raid against non-Muslims.) He said that Jews had divided the Arabs and the army of Muhammed would return to live in Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and at that time non-believers would be humbled and have to pay tax to the Muslim rulers. He was seen by several medical professionals at the police station and assessed. The cuts he had caused to his hands were treated at hospital. He was fit to be detained and to be interviewed.

19. In an interview the following day in the presence of an independent solicitor and interpreter the Defendant confessed to the attempted murder of Javed Nouri and the murder of Terence Carney. Initially he believed he had succeeded in killing both men. He explained that the issue was the independence of Palestine. He had killed two adults in revenge for Israel killing innocent people and children by airstrikes which demolished buildings and destroyed infrastructure.

20. He repeatedly expressed the view that the "*dunya*" (this world or humanity in general) was rotten. He said that if he had had more weapons and a machine gun he would have killed thousands. He described Mr Carney as an innocent victim who was killed because Britain had created Israel (which he called "the Zionist entity.") He predicted that Britain was on the verge of a flood, unrest and an explosion if Israel did not leave Gaza. He said Britain would be a wreck. He claimed he was ready for his own "*Shahada*" (martyrdom.) There is no evidence that the Defendant had or sought access to a firearm in the UK although in his evidence he said he had known someone in Germany who did.

21. During the interview he became irritated with the interpreter. After it ended he got up and blocked the door preventing the officers from opening it. His solicitor was so concerned he made an emergency call from inside the room. When the door was opened from the outside the Defendant lunged at one of the two female interviewing officers and he refused to release her. The other officer tried to separate them. All three fell to the floor. The officers were shaken and one suffered modest injury. The Defendant was convicted of deliberately assaulting two emergency workers.

22. He was charged on 16 October and in response to the two main charges he continued to reiterate his beliefs and the justification for his actions, namely, that the "Zionists" have killed lots of children and people, far more than those he had killed, and the "Zionists" must go because they are criminal and killing innocent people. He also repeated that the United Kingdom was fully accountable for what was happening in Palestine.

The legal principles relevant to the exercise of judgment I must carry out are summarised in the judgment of the Lord Chief Justice in R v Stewart and others in 2022. The key responsibility of the judge is to have full regard to the features of the case before her so that the sentence truly reflects the seriousness of the particular offences. I am grateful to counsel on both sides for the assistance they have given me. No presentence report was requested and none was necessary. I have regard to the terms of Schedule 21 and remind myself that reaching a conclusion in a case like this is not a matter of mathematical formulae or mechanical application of a balance sheet of features pointing towards or away from a particular outcome.

This was a murder and attempted murder carried out in revenge for the actions of Israel bombing in the Gaza Strip in response to a terrorist attack. It was also a reaction to the religious conflict with Javed Nouri. The Defendant said in clear terms afterwards that his intention was to influence Britain's leaders and its people and thereby advance a religious and political cause, namely that of Islam and the independence of Palestine. The mention of British involvement in the creation of Israel refers back to more than 100 years of history. In a letter, known as the Balfour Declaration, written to a leader of the British Jewish community in 1917 the then Foreign Secretary committed the British Government to establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. A period known as the British mandate after World War I was full of conflict in the region. The conflict continued after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and as we all know, it continues still.

Schedule 21 paragraph 2 states that the appropriate starting point is a whole life order if the court considers that the seriousness of the offence (or of the combination of the offence and another offence associated with it) is exceptionally high, and the offender was over the age of 21 when the offence was committed. The schedule makes it clear that a murder done for the purpose of advancing a religious or political cause will normally be an offence of exceptionally high seriousness. It is on a par with the usual outcome when a police officer is murdered in the execution of his duty. This is because they are both examples of crimes whose magnitude go far beyond the murder of an individual. They are an attempt to undermine and destroy foundational components of an ordered, democratic country where causes are promoted through lawful means, not violence.

The violence itself was short-lived. Nonetheless, I have come to the firm conclusion, given the Defendant's explanation of his motives in the police interview, a whole life order is the correct starting point.

In common with the other starting points in Schedule 21 the starting point is not always the end point. The court must also weigh all relevant features including aggravating and mitigating circumstances. Detailed consideration of these may result in a minimum term of any length or in the making of a whole life order: paragraph 8 Schedule 21.

The criteria in s.69 of the Terrorism Act 2020 are met in this case and the law is that I must treat that as an aggravating feature and say so, which I do. The Defendant committed two acts of serious violence against people, for the purpose of advancing a political or religious cause and his attacks were designed to influence the government and intimidate the public through fear. There are other aggravating elements. That there was premeditation in this case is beyond doubt, Mr Alid was threatening in his manner towards Mr Nouri in particular in the days leading up to 15 October and the fear he caused was such as to lead to a report to the police. The reason was that Mr Nouri had decided to leave the Muslim religion. On the night itself he deliberately armed himself with two knives and waited until his victim was asleep and in a

vulnerable state, before breaking into his room. He took one of the knives out of the house, for use as a weapon and used it to kill.

Turning to mitigation advanced on the Defendant's. There are five factors which require consideration.

1. It is submitted that I should conclude that there was an intention to cause really serious harm, (the very thing the Defendant denied at his trial) rather than an intention to kill. I reject that argument. Ahmed Alid intended to kill both of his victims and succeeded in killing one.
2. A psychiatric assessment of Mr Alid was carried out prior to his trial and again on the day the trial began. There was no evidence of mental ill-health relied on prior to conviction. Subsequently, two reports have been served. Psychosis and any other serious mental illness have been excluded. The diagnosis is that of a recognised medical condition, a minor mental illness, called an adjustment disorder which would have impacted on the defendant's judgment. Dr Turner identifies the cause of this temporary condition as the combination of pressures under which the Defendant found himself from conflict in the house with Mr Nouri, his impecuniosity, his drawn-out wait for a decision on his asylum application and permission to work, worry about his mother's ill-health, together with the acute emotional impact on his religious sensibility of the suffering caused to Muslims by the Hamas/Israel conflict. In my judgment the adjustment disorder provides very limited mitigation, it explains to some degree his antagonism in the shared house but it does not reduce his culpability for murder or attempted murder at all because it is not sufficiently connected to such a serious level of violence.
3. The Defendant told the psychiatrist that his mental state settled down ten days after his arrest, that he regretted what he had done and he felt very guilty. The expression of regret and guilt was not reflected in guilty pleas to any criminal offence, not even the assaults on the police officers. I have had the opportunity to observe Mr Alid at length, particularly during his evidence. I have seen no sign of apology or remorse. This is a lack of mitigation and demonstrates that what he said to the psychiatrist was not borne of genuine contrition.
4. In my judgment, the only mitigation of any weight overall, is in the lack of evidence of prior terrorist inclinations already identified. However, as noted that does not equate to there being no evidence of premeditation or preparation. The defendant's antagonism towards Javid Nouri had been growing and Mr Nouri was frightened of him. The Defendant has subsequently tried to minimise the religious element to his attacks, telling the psychiatrist that he did not say '*Allahu Akbar*' when stabbing Mr Nouri and, although he had to admit to the jury that he had said it, he tried to minimise it by saying he was crying out to Allah because he thought Mr Nouri was going to kill him. This was plainly a lie and indicates again that the defendant has no genuine remorse or pity towards his victims, as opposed to regret for the outcome and consequences.
5. I take into account that Mr Alid has no previous record of criminal convictions, although this is of lesser potency than in other circumstances, given the severity of these offences.

Imposing a sentence under paragraph 2 is the last resort for cases of the utmost gravity where the judge is satisfied that just punishment requires it. Each conviction which falls within the whole life order starting point must be considered on its own facts. I have given this case thorough consideration.

The murder of Terence Carney was an extremely serious offence. Those who genuinely seek refuge in this country will embrace the values we hold dear. These values include respect for the dignity of each person as an individual, with freedom to choose their political opinion without intimidation, and whether to observe a particular faith without fear or oppression. These moral and ethical principles are based on the Judeo-Christian foundation of our social structures. Not all ideas are of equal quality or integrity, but religious and political freedom is something that generations have fought for. Given my findings of fact, the murder of Terence Carney and attempted murder of Javed Nouri were intended to subvert those values and to lead our government to pursue a particular course concerning the situation in Palestine, by force and fear rather than through democratic means. This means those offences were of extreme gravity even in the context of murder. Inevitably, given his age today, the appropriate term, if a finite term is set, will be of such a length as to lead to the Defendant spending most of the rest of his life in custody.

Having considered all these matters, especially the outcome of the Counter-Terrorism Command's investigation into the Defendant's prior mind-set and bearing in mind the power I have to impose a suitably severe minimum term, I am not persuaded that this is one of the rare and exceptional cases in which the element of just punishment and retribution can only be satisfied by the imposition of a whole life order on count 2, murder.

Accordingly, I reach a provisional minimum term above that in paragraph 3 of Schedule 19 because this was a terrorist offence. It is also necessary to allow for a proportionate increase to take into account the attempted murder.

Applying the Sentencing Council's Attempted Murder guideline the offence in count 1, it is agreed, is one of category 2A seriousness, as Mr Nouri received life-threatening injuries although, due to the work of the emergency services, without long-term physical consequences. This is a Schedule 19 offence. The starting point is 30 years imprisonment within a range of 25-35 years. The aggravating and mitigating features have already been discussed.

I agree with the prosecution that Mr Alid is a dangerous offender and in all the circumstances the conviction on attempted murder requires the imposition of imprisonment for life under s.285 Sentencing Act 2020. The notional determinate sentence that would have been imposed had the court not come to that conclusion is one of 30 years imprisonment. The sentence on count 1 must be a concurrent term of life imprisonment with a minimum term of 20 years minus the period spent on remand since his arrest which is 213 days. This means the minimum term for that life sentence if it was the only offence I had to sentence for, would be 19 years and 152 days. It should be understood by everyone that because of the sentence on count 2 this period, which I have to state by law, does not actually affect the overall period to be served. Accordingly, I bear in mind both the concurrent term on count 1 and the terrorism aggravation in fixing a final just and proportionate term to be served for murder.

In all the circumstances, before making the adjustment to allow for the period already served on remand the minimum term on count 2 for murder, is 45 years.

Ahmed Ali Alid, on 15 October last year you attacked and murdered Terence Carney in a terrorist act. You intended it as revenge for the actions of a foreign country, Israel and to intimidate and influence the British government in its international relations. You hoped to frighten the people of Britain and to undermine the freedoms they enjoy. When you attempted to kill Javed Nouri it was also intended to punish him for converting to Christianity, because that is not permitted by your Muslim faith which brands him an apostate. For each of these offences you are sentenced to life imprisonment. For attempted murder the minimum term is

19 years 152 days. This will be served concurrent to the sentence for murder. The minimum term for murder, of which you must serve every day, is 44 years and 152 days. After that time has passed the Parole Board will be able to decide whether you can be released. It is possible that you will not be released even then.

Given the sentences I have passed there will be no separate penalty for the two charges of assaulting an emergency worker in the execution of her duty.

Finally, I impose the statutory surcharge in the appropriate amount.

You may go down.

COMMENDATIONS

The court commends the work of Counter Terrorism Policing in the North East. Every investigation of this type is complex and demanding. The leader of this team was Detective Superintendent Paul Greenwood who ran a strong team. From amongst them I commend the interviewing officers DC Angela Harvey and DC Emma Stevenson, and DS Jon Brayshaw the Senior Investigating officer. In addition the court commends the dedication and quick-thinking of PC Ian Widdas and PC Russell Sinclair who were the armed officers in the initial response. After ensuring Mr Nouri was being treated and having heard that the suspect was being searched for, they located Ahmed Alid within minutes and arrested him using firm and safe procedures to disarm and apprehend thus preventing any further danger to life.

The court also commends the courage of Javed Nouri, Mohammed Karimi (known as Somal) and Ariyan Karimi who all of whom gave evidence with dignity, honesty and grace without regard to the consequences for themselves.

The family of Terence Carney have demonstrated dignity which does his memory great credit.

Cheema-Grubb J.

17 May 2024