

R v Aminan Rahman

Sentencing Remarks

Central Criminal Court, 30 July 2024.

1. Suma Begum was a lively, attractive young woman and a devoted mother. She was kind to you even when she decided, as was her right, that she no longer wanted to be your wife. She had dreamed of a new, different life with a man about her own age, which dreams you stopped on 29 April last year when you very deliberately killed her. Sadly these courts often have to deal with men who have murdered their wives or partners, but what you did was more shocking even than most of those awful crimes. Within moments of strangling Ms Begum you folded her body into a suitcase and threw it into the Thames basin, hoping it would never be found. All of this, the murder, somehow cramming her into that case, and throwing her into the water was done in the sight of her two year old son. Your son, and a boy you claim to love. The only sentence I can pass on you for murder is life imprisonment, and I say at the outset that the minimum term I have decided to impose is one of 22 years.
2. I also need to pass sentences for the offences of preventing a decent and lawful burial and common assault. For the former I have considered the cases of *Godward* [1998] 1 Cr. App. R. (S.) 385 and *Williams* [2023] EWCA Crim 489. This was a very serious example of this offence as you clearly hoped Suma Begum would never be found. For that offence I would have passed a sentence of 8 years' imprisonment after trial. I allow a 25% reduction for your guilty plea, indicated in advance of the start of your trial, so I pass a sentence of 6 years, concurrent to life imprisonment. For the offence of common assault I have regard to the relevant Sentencing Council guideline: This was a category 1A offence with the aggravating feature of it being domestic abuse and I impose a sentence of 6 months' imprisonment, consecutive to the sentence for preventing a burial but concurrent to the life sentence. As those two offences are quite distinct from one another and

as both will be concurrent to the life imprisonment, totality is not an issue in your case. I also impose the statutory surcharge in a sum to be notified.

3. The effect of a sentence of life imprisonment is that you may never be released, but I have to set a minimum term before you can apply to be freed on licence. I need to have regard to schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020 and the Sentencing Council Overarching Principles guidance on Domestic Abuse. The days you have spent in custody, 453 as of today, need to be deducted from the minimum term. Any facts I rely on must have been proved so as to make me sure.
4. Suma Begum was brought here from Bangladesh, as a distant relative, to marry you. You and she settled in Bridgwater, where you worked, and soon after she became pregnant with your son. By the time she became pregnant a second time, she had decided she no longer wanted to be with you, as was her right. I have seen a large number of messages sent between you and Ms Begum. Your messages cannot be relied upon given that after attacking her on 6 February 2023, you then claimed in subsequent messages that she had attacked you. Her messages to you, on the other hand, I judge to be honest and open. It was clear she was doing her best to negotiate her separation from you with kindness and decency.
5. On 6 February last year, when visiting her, your son and your infant daughter you lost your temper and attacked her, seizing her by the throat leaving scratches and bruises. I have already indicated the sentence I will impose for that offence but its greater significant lies in the fact that your murderous violence in April 2023 was not an isolated incident.
6. In late April 2023 you, Suma Begum and the children moved to the flat by the River Lea. From the pattern of her phone usage and the fact she hid her phone, I am sure that you had already been causing her fear and trepidation in the hours before her death. Not long before midnight on 30 April you used your phone to call her boyfriend, Shahin Miah. He was able to record the images of what followed but not

the sound, but I am sure his account of what was said is true and yours in evidence was lies.

7. Mr Miah's evidence and the film show that Ms Begum was in fear as you threatened to take her life. Your son, seeing his mother try to hide beneath a blanket, thought it was a game and smilingly tried to clamber under the blanket with her: Those images were desperately hard to watch but gave the jury and myself some insight into Suma Begum's fear and despair in the time leading to her death. As you attacked her the camera froze and the call ended. Something less than a minute later you called Shahin Miah again. By now Ms Begum was at least unconscious and if you had cared in the least about that young woman you would have called for help, but instead you called her boyfriend to show him what you had done. By now her two year old son was stood round-eyed and silent, seeing his Mother dead or dying at the hands of his Father. At some stage you took one of your wife's scarves, wrapped it round her neck, and strangled her. It is quite clear you intended to do exactly what you did.
8. Within minutes of having murdered Ms Begum you got a large suitcase and folded her dead body into it. I am sure your son would have witnessed that as there were other residents in the flat so you could hardly have carried out that gruesome task in the hall way or sitting room. You then wheeled the case, also leading your son by his hand, to the river bank. The waters were high at the time. When you tipped that case into the river you must have hoped and planned that her body would never be found. You then set about weaving a web of lies to create the impression she had left you of her own volition, to cover up what you had done.
9. I have heard a witness statement written by Suma Begum's brother, Mr Amin, on behalf of all the family including her Mother. He sets out, in the most moving terms, how devastating the murder has been for them all, and how hard it has been to contemplate the terrible loss to the children. I am acutely conscious that nothing I can say, and no sentence I can pass, can heal the wound you have caused.

10. The Family Court has supplied me with expert reports on the children. Both missed their Mother terribly in the early weeks of their time being looked after. Your son was distressed at the sight of any man. There are grave concerns about the effect of these terrible events on both children, above and beyond being deprived of their mother's care and love. Your son, old enough to perceive the violence if not understand the full extent of what he saw, has been showing symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Both children are left at increased risk of future mental ill health and other vulnerabilities.

11. The Sentencing Council's guidance on domestic abuse makes a number of points that are highly relevant to the sentence I have to pass today:

- (1) *"The domestic context of the offending behaviour makes the offending more serious because it represents a violation of the trust and security that normally exists between people in an intimate or family relationship"*.
- (2) *"In respect of offences committed within a domestic context, an offender's good character in relation to conduct outside these offences should generally be of no relevance where there is a proven pattern of behaviour"*
- (3) *"Provocation is no mitigation to an offence within a domestic context, except in rare circumstances"*. [I add straight away, this is not one of those rare cases given the long standing partial separation and the consideration shown by Ms Begum towards you, as I have already mentioned].

12. Schedule 21 sets a starting point for the minimum term I must impose of 15 years but there are several aggravating factors:

- (1) Your concealment of Suma Begum's body.
- (2) The mental suffering inflicted before her death, as shown on the filmed calls and safely deduced from the phone usage I have already mentioned.
- (3) This was domestic abuse, both from the immediate context and given the jury's verdict for the 6 February assault.
- (4) The presence of the two children.

13. There is some slight mitigation in your lack of previous convictions, but the domestic abuse context renders that of lesser significance.

14. The minimum term I impose is one of 22 years. From that I need to deduct the days you have already spent in custody.

15. The sentences I pass are as follows:

- (1) For preventing the lawful and decent burial of Suma Begum, 6 years' imprisonment concurrent to life imprisonment.
- (2) For common assault 6 months' imprisonment, consecutive to the sentence for preventing the burial, but concurrent to life imprisonment.
- (3) For the murder of Suma Begum, life imprisonment with a minimum term of 20 years 277 days.

Joel Bennathan

30 July 2024