



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

THE KING

V

URFAN SHARIF

BEINASH BATOOL

FAISAL MALIK

17 December 2024

Sentencing Remarks of Mr Justice Cavanagh

1. Urfan Sharif, Beinash Batool, and Faisal Malik, you were convicted on 11 December 2024, after a trial at this court, of offences relating to the death of Sara Sharif on 8 August 2023. Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, you were convicted of murder. Faisal Malik, you were acquitted of murder, but were convicted of causing or allowing the death of a child.
2. Sara was 10 years old when she was murdered. You, Urfan Sharif, were her father. You, Beinash Batool, were her stepmother. You, Faisal Malik, were her uncle. Sara's death was the culmination of years of neglect, frequent assaults, and what can only be described as the torture of this small child, mainly, but not entirely, at the hands of you, her father, Urfan Sharif. The degree of cruelty involved is almost inconceivable. This happened in plain sight, in front of the rest of the family, including, for the last eight months of Sara's life, in front of you, Faisal Malik. The courts at the Old Bailey have been witness to many accounts of awful crimes, but few can have been more terrible than the account of the despicable treatment of this poor child that the jury in this case have had to endure.
3. Judges must be careful about using the word "torture". It should not be overused. But is it no exaggeration to describe the campaign of abuse against Sara as torture.

4. None of you has shown a shred of true remorse. You, Urfan Sharif, maintained for six days or so in the witness box that all of the injuries that had been suffered by Sara had been inflicted upon her by Beinash Batool. Eventually, when it became clear that your description of events had no credibility at all, you changed tack and accepted responsibility for Sara's death, whilst focussing your efforts from then on upon an attempt to exonerate your co-defendants. Even then, however, your stated remorse was no more than a ploy: you were still trying to wriggle out of responsibility for your crimes by asserting that you had not intended to cause any injury to Sara, and by allowing your counsel to contend that your admitted assaults on Sara were not the cause of her death. As for you, Beinash Batool and Faisal Malik, you remained silent at trial and have made no effort to accept any responsibility for your offending.
5. Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, there is only one sentence that the law allows me to pass for the offence of murder. It is a sentence of imprisonment for life. That is the sentence that I will pass, but I am also required by the Sentencing Act 2020 to specify a minimum term which must elapse before you can be considered for release on licence.
6. It is important to stress two matters at the outset.
7. The first is that you – and everyone concerned with this case or watching, reading, or reporting this sentence – should understand what your sentence of imprisonment for life in fact means. The minimum term is not a fixed term after which you will automatically be released. Rather, it is the minimum time that you must spend in custody before your case can be considered by the Parole Board. It is for the Parole Board to say, after expiry of the minimum term, whether or not you are fit to be released. There is no guarantee that an offender upon whom a minimum term order has been imposed will be released once the minimum term has expired, or at any particular time thereafter. If and when you are released, you will be subject to licence and this will remain the case for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence were to be revoked, such as if you reoffend, you will be recalled to continue to serve your sentence in custody. You will, therefore, face the consequences for the rest of your life.

8. The second matter is this: I will say something about Sara in a moment, but I should emphasise at this stage that the sentences that I am about to impose upon you, and upon Faisal Malik, should not be seen by anyone as being intended to be a measure of the value of Sara's life. Nothing that I can do will provide recompense for the loss of this young child's life.
9. As for you, Faisal Malik, the Sentencing Council has published a guideline on the offence of causing or allowing the death of a child, which I must follow, unless it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. In relation to all three of you, I have taken into account the Overarching Principles guideline and, in relation to you Beinash Batool, the passages in the Equal Treatment Bench Book that were drawn to my attention.
10. The victim surcharge will apply, and the minimum terms, in the case of you, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, and the determinate sentence to be served by you, Faisal Malik, will be reduced by the amount of time that you have spent in custody on remand. You have each spent 458 days on remand.

The facts

11. I was the trial judge. The evidence at trial has enabled me to obtain a clear picture of what happened to Sara, both at the time of her death and in the period leading up to it. I am satisfied so that I am sure that what follows is an accurate description of the circumstances of Sara's murder and the events before and after it.
12. It will take some time to describe the facts of the case. I intend to do so in some detail. This is for two reasons. First, I do so in order to explain the reasons for the sentences that I am about to pass. Second, I do so in tribute to Sara, so that the full scale of the ordeal that she suffered is brought out into the open.
13. Sara was born on 11th January 2013. For the first few years of her life, she lived with her mother, Olga Domin, and her older brother and one her mother's sons from a previous relationship. Her older brother had been born in 2010. You, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, began a relationship in late 2014 and by early 2015 you were living together in Woking, Surrey. Until June 2017, you, Urfan Sharif, only had supervised contact with Sara and her older brother. From then until March 2019, Sara and her brother would stay with you on weekends and

during school holidays. In March 2019, Sara and her older brother made allegations of abuse at the hands of their mother, and from then on they lived with you in your home. Eventually, a court awarded you, Urfan Sharif, custody of the two children. By then, three more children had been born to you, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool. Two female twins were born in January 2016. They were premature, and they suffer from autism and global developmental delay. As they grew older, their behaviour became very challenging. In December 2018, you had a son together, who also suffers from ill health. Another son was born in July 2022.

14. This means that, by Summer 2022, the family consisted of two adults and six children. You lived together in a small flat in West Byfleet from 2017 until April 2023, and then in a three bedroomed house in Horsell, Woking. Both homes were too small for a family of this size, especially given the twins' challenging behaviour. You, Urfan Sharif, worked long hours as a taxi driver. You, Beinash Batool, spent your time at home looking after the children.
15. The only credible evidence of events from 2019 until the period immediately before Sara's death comes from three sources. First, there are recovered WhatsApp messages that were sent by Beinash Batool to her sisters. Second, there is evidence from the family's neighbours and from teachers, staff, and a parent at Sara's primary school. Third, there is the evidence that you, Urfan Sharif, gave after you had abandoned the lie that you had never assaulted Sara. Your evidence must, however, be regarded with a great degree of scepticism, because, even after you had made admissions, you continued to conceal the true extent of your cruelty towards Sara and were not truthful about the involvement and knowledge of the others.
16. Urfan Sharif, it is clear from the evidence that I am sure is accurate that your assaults on Sara commenced in or about 2019, soon after she moved to live full-time in the family home. From then on, Beinash Batool regularly reported to her sisters that you would go crazy and beat Sara. Sometimes, she would send photos to her sisters of the bruises on Sara's body. I have seen some of the photos and it is clear from them that you regularly inflicted serious violence on your daughter. You would also design unpleasant punishments for her, such as making her stand against a wall holding her arms up, or making this small child do sit-ups. On occasion you woke her in the middle of the night to impose a physical punishment

upon her. There is a sinister video, shown to the jury, of you cuddling your youngest son soon after his birth. Sara was next to you, trying to play with the baby, and you were casually slapping her away. A bruise can be seen on her forehead. Twice, in June 2022 and again in April 2023, you took a sudden decision to take Sara out of school and to homeschool her. On each occasion, this was because the visible signs of the beatings that you had carried out had become so obvious that you were worried that the authorities would find out how you were treating her. You, Beinash Batool, did not stand in Urfan Sharif's way, and you did nothing significant to protect Sara. You encouraged and assisted Urfan Sharif in his assaults, although I cannot be sure that, until near the end, you actively participated in the assaults upon Sara.

17. There are a number of particularly disturbing features about the way that you, Urfan Sharif, and you, Beinash Batool, habitually treated Sara.
18. First, it is clear that Sara was singled out amongst the children for this treatment. There is no evidence of violence towards her older brother, or towards her younger siblings, despite the fact that the behaviour of the twins was much more challenging than Sara's ever was. There were at least two reasons for this. I have no doubt that you both cared much less for Sara than you did for the younger children because, unlike them, she was not Beinash Batool's natural child. I also have no doubt that Sara was treated differently from her older brother, even though they had the same parentage, because he was a boy, and she was a girl.
19. Second, it is clear that, from a very young age, Sara was treated as a skivvy in the family. From the age of 6 or 7, she was made to do the washing and to hang it up. She had to tidy up the house. She was made to take a major role in caring for her youngest brother. Although, from time to time, you, Beinash Batool, would perform some acts of kindness towards Sara, such as buying her clothes to match the twins' clothes, in general neither of you had any concern for the happiness or quality of life of this small child. You treated her as if she was worthless. You made no allowances for her age. Chillingly, in one WhatsApp message you, Beinash Batool, said that you thought that Sara had a Jinn, a demon, in her.
20. Third, though Sara was theoretically being homeschooled, there is no evidence that she received any form of education whatsoever. The pretext of homeschooling was simply a ruse adopted for wholly selfish purposes, to cover up

the abuse to which Sara was subject, and to continue with the abuse beyond the gaze of the authorities. At the time when Sara was being subjected to despicable abuse, she was also being deprived of an education.

21. Fourth, for some time Sara was made to wear the hijab, and her whole body was covered up. This was not for any religious reasons, and was certainly not because Sara chose to do so. You did not wear a hijab, Beinash Batool, and the women in Urfan Sharif's family did not so do. This was another expedient to cover up the bruises that were all over Sara's body.

22. As for your motives, Urfan Sharif, for your beatings and other abuse of Sara, you treated her in such a way because you considered it to be your right to impose harsh discipline upon her. Sara was a brave, feisty and spirited child. She was not submissive, as you wanted her to be. She stood up to you. You considered that her behaviour entitled you to chastise her physically, and I have no doubt that your ego and sense of self-importance were boosted by the power that you wielded over her and the rest of the family. In fact, Sara was not particularly badly behaved. She was a normal child of her age. The beatings began when she was 6 or 7. Sara never did anything that might conceivably have justified any part of the treatment that she endured. I should add that there was no sexual motive behind your treatment of Sara.

23. So far as you are concerned, Beinash Batool, you went along with the abuse by your husband. As I have said, you cared less about Sara because she was not your own natural child. You were heard by neighbours yelling and swearing at Sara. It is true that you made clear to your sisters in the WhatsApp messages on many occasions that you were horrified by the abuse that Urfan Sharif was inflicting on Sara. But you took no serious steps to stop it. You would sometimes put cream on her wounds. On one occasion, in February 2022, you saw a solicitor and took advice about a divorce and about obtaining a non-molestation order and arrangement orders for your stepchildren, but you took it no further. You did not intervene with any vigour to stop Urfan Sharif from hitting Sara. You did not seek intervention to protect Sara because you were concerned that if you did so you would lose custody of all the children. In effect, you were prepared to sacrifice Sara because you did not want to lose your other children. Put bluntly, you did not care enough about Sara to save her.

24. At times, you took active steps to cover up for your husband. You would sometimes put make-up on Sara's bruises when she went to school to conceal them from her teachers. You went along with the decision to homeschool Sara.
25. Moreover, it is clear from the telephone evidence that was put before the court, and from some parts of Urfan Sharif's evidence that were credible, that often when Urfan Sharif was at work, and you thought that Sara was being troublesome, you would call Urfan Sharif to summon him home, knowing full well that this would be likely to result in a beating for Sara, and intending for this to happen. You encouraged and assisted in the abuse.
26. Furthermore, it is clear from evidence that I will come to in a moment that, towards the end of Sara's life, you actively participated in some of the abuse that she suffered.
27. There is no doubt that you were subject to coercion and control by Urfan Sharif. For example, he refused to attend the birth of your youngest child, and he forbade your family members from accompanying you at the birth. But you have a strong character and you could have stood up to Urfan Sharif in relation to his treatment of Sara if you had been motivated to do so.
28. The stress, pain, and trauma that this campaign of violence will have caused to Sara is hard to contemplate. Sara began to vomit up food and at times she soiled herself. There can be no doubt that this was a reaction to the abuse to which she was subjected. Predictably, but tragically, your reaction to this, Urfan Sharif, was to beat Sara more. You punished her because of her physical reaction to your abuse. When Sara soiled herself, you, Beinash Batool, would ring Urfan Sharif and would call him home to sort it out, knowing very well, and intending, that he would deal with it by beating Sara.
29. You, Faisal Malik, arrived in the household in December 2022. You came from Pakistan to undertake a postgraduate course at Portsmouth University. At first you lived with the family in their very small flat in West Byfleet and then, in April 2023, you moved with them to the house in Horsell. You commuted to the University, until term ended in May 2023. From then on, you spent the bulk of your time in the house, apart from spending 20 hours a week working shifts at

McDonalds, and, from time to time, spending a few hours hanging around a local park.

30. I have no doubt whatsoever that you, Faisal Malik, were aware of the campaign of torture that was being perpetrated against Sara, primarily by your brother. The house and the flat were too small and too overcrowded for there to be any other realistic conclusion. The injuries found on Sara's body when she died, which I will come to in a moment, show that she was the victim of very many assaults in the home, especially in the last weeks of her life. It is inconceivable that you were not around for any of them, or that you did not see or hear anything, or that you were unaware that she was being tied up. The idea that was, at one stage, put forward on your behalf, that you were too busy on your phone or listening on your earbuds to notice anything happening to Sara is, frankly, preposterous. Also, the fact that, as her uncle, you would, for cultural reasons, only have seen Sara when she was fully dressed, does not mean that you were not aware of what was going on. The jury was shown a video of a barbecue in the garden of the house in June 2023, which you attended. Sara can be seen without a hijab and with visible bruising, including marks on her neck. I cannot be sure that you were present for all of the assaults on Sara during the time you were staying with the family, indeed, I am sure that you were not, but you were present for, and well aware of, a substantial number of them.

31. It is true that you had only just arrived in the UK, and were a guest in the household, but this cannot possibly excuse your failure to do anything to help or protect Sara. You were not a child, you were 28 years old, and anyone, however much they were in awe of their brother, should have recognised that what was happening to Sara was dangerous and wrong and had to be stopped. There was no reason why you could not have summoned help from outside the home. Even if you were unaware of the existence of the social services or other agencies, there is no doubt that you knew that there was a police force which could have been called in to protect Sara.

32. These assaults were also carried out in front of the other children, or at least in locations where the beatings and Sara's screams could be heard by the other children. The properties were too small for it to be otherwise. It is clear, in particular, that Sara's older brother was well aware of the constant ill-treatment of his sister, and that this affected his own behaviour towards her.

33. As for the way in which Sara was being treated in the last couple of months of her life, we have another reliable source of evidence: the medical evidence. This evidence was harrowing. The post-mortem evidence shows that, when she died, Sara had at least 71 separate fresh injuries on her body, mainly bruises and abrasions in various places. I emphasise that these were only the fresh injuries: that is, those that were sustained in the last few days before death. Dr Cary, the pathologist, said that he also found marks of older injuries which are not included in the 71. I have no doubt that still more injuries will have healed and will have left no mark. Sara had been beaten on her head, her face, her chest, her abdomen, and on each of her arms and legs. Some of the marks were consistent with restraints being used, in other words with Sara being tied up. Many of these injuries had tramline markings, which show that she had been beaten with an elongated object. You, Urfan Sharif, have admitted to beating Sara on a number of occasions with a metal pole, part of a high-chair. The pole was found at the property after Sara's death. You also admitted to beating Sara with a cricket bat which was also found at the property. At one stage you admitted to doing this multiple times but then you changed your evidence and would only admit to doing so once. I have no doubt that, in fact, this was a regular occurrence, at least towards the end. You also admitted to hitting her on the head with a mobile phone.
34. In addition to the 71 fresh injuries, the medical experts found a total of 25 separate fractures to the bones in Sara's body. These included a fractured collar bone, two fractured shoulder blades, fractured ribs, a fractured humerus, eleven separate fractures to her spinal column, and fractures to bones in both of her hands. The medical evidence stated that many of these injuries were highly unusual in a child. They went beyond what would be seen in sporting injuries and were of a severity that is rare even in road traffic accidents. They would have required multiple episodes of violence, each involving a substantial degree of force. These fractures were dated, variously, between 8 weeks before death and two weeks or so before death. This is not a case of a single episode of maltreatment, therefore: this poor child was battered with great force, again and again.
35. Some of the injuries require special mention, because they demonstrate the almost unbelievable torture to which Sara was subjected in the last weeks of her life. The medical experts identified a fracture in the hyoid bone in Sara's neck.

This is a very unusual injury and was the result of very vigorous and energetic manual strangulation, quite possibly on more than one different occasion. Sara sustained a serious brain injury a few days before she died, as the result of a blow to her head. I have no doubt that you, Urfan Sharif, were responsible for these injuries. In addition, she had two open burn wounds on her buttocks. These were in the shape of the soleplate of an iron and matched the iron that was found in the house. These wounds had undoubtedly been caused by Sara's buttocks being pressed for several seconds against the hot plate of the iron, no doubt as a punishment. This would have required two people to carry out, one to hold Sara down and the other to press Sara against the iron. I am sure that you, Urfan Sharif, and you, Beinash Batool, jointly inflicted this injury. One of the most disturbing features of this whole case is that the burns expert, Dr Martin, said that this injury was sustained at least two weeks and more likely 2-6 weeks before death. He said it would have been very painful. So, Sara had this terrible wound in her buttocks for a number of weeks before she died, but nobody had properly treated it or sought medical help for her. Had she lived, it would have caused permanent disfigurement. In addition, when she died, Sara had open burn wounds on the bones of the inside of each ankle. The only possible explanation for this, as is made clear by the medical evidence, is that Sara's ankles were tied and then either her feet were wrapped around a hot pipe or, more likely, boiling water was poured on her ankles. Once again, the wounds had not been treated, and no medical help had been sought for Sara.

36. The post-mortem investigation showed that Sara had six bite marks on her body. Five of them were on her left arm and one was on the inside of her left thigh. The marks were made by an adult. You, Urfan Sharif and Faisal Malik, and Sara's older brother, each provided teeth impressions, and each was excluded from being responsible for the tooth marks. You, Beinash Batool, declined to give a tooth impression, and the only possible inference is that it was you who made these bite marks. Though the bite marks were not, in themselves, fatal injuries, the fact that you were prepared to assault Sara in this way provides an insight into the extent to which you were complicit in, and comfortable with, the abuse that Sara was suffering.

37. But the medical and forensic evidence does not stop there. It is absolutely clear that, in the last few weeks of her life, Sara was tied up. She was trussed up with masking tape and with skipping rope. Even worse, she was hooded. Plastic bags

were put over her head, which were then held in place with masking tape, and a hole was ripped in the plastic bag through which she could breathe. Sara's DNA and hair were found on the masking tape and in one of the hoods. This treatment of a 10-year-old child is nothing short of gruesome. It is hard to imagine how terrifying it must have been for Sara, especially as the treatment was at the hands of her own parents. It gets worse. When the bins at the house were examined after Sara's death, the police found a soiled nappy wrapped around Sara's leggings. It is clear that you, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, were putting Sara in pull-up nappies because she was unable to go to the toilet whilst she was trussed up. There was medical evidence that you would then let her stew in her own urine and faeces. Dr Martin said that the injuries to Sara's ankles appeared to have been made worse by the fact that her ankles had been in contact with urine and faeces. This also means that the restraints were so tight that Sara's feet and ankles were pulled up so that they were in contact with her bottom.

38. I have no doubt, in light of the evidence, that Sara will have been left trussed up for considerable periods of time, including when Urfan Sharif was out of the house, and when Beinash Batool and Faisal Malik were the only adults in the house. I have no doubt, therefore, that you, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, were jointly responsible for tying Sara up in this way, though I am sure that the idea will have been Urfan Sharif's.

39. The medical evidence also shows that, at the time of death, Sara was underweight and undernourished.

40. The pathologist who carried out Sara's post-mortem examination, Dr Cary, described the cause of Sara's death as being complications arising from multiple injuries and neglect. He said that the cause of death was not specific to a single injury or incident, but that the injuries she had suffered cumulatively caused Sara's death. I have no doubt that Dr Cary is right about this. I therefore reject the contention put forward at trial by the Defence teams that Sara's death was solely caused by the brain injury that she suffered a few days before her death. That may well have been the last straw, but the constellation of injuries that Sara suffered over many weeks each made a significant contribution to Sara's death. This includes the burns to which you, Beinash Batool, directly contributed.

41. I now come on to the events on the evening of Sara's death. It is clear that, at least partially as a result of the brain injury, Sara suffered a decline in the few days before she died. In the early evening of Tuesday 8 August, you, Beinash Batool, saw that Sara was acting as if she was very unwell. You were worried and telephoned Urfan Sharif to come home. You, Urfan Sharif, assumed that Sara was acting up and faking illness. You did come home, but you were in no particular hurry: you stopped on the way at a shop to buy some vapes. You admit that, when you came home and found Sara floppy in Beinash Batool's arms, you did not seek medical help for her. You did not comfort her. Instead, incredibly, you took up the metal pole and beat Sara vigorously on her abdomen to punish her for pretending to be ill. A few moments later, Sara died. The marks of that final beating were on Sara's body when it was found.
42. You, Faisal Malik, were in the house, though probably not in the same room, when Sara died.
43. The steps that the three of you took immediately after Sara's death were quite extraordinary. You did not call the police or an ambulance. Instead, you immediately sprang into action to protect yourselves by taking steps to flee to Pakistan, with a view to abandoning Sara's body in the house. Within less than an hour of Sara's death, you were on the phone to a travel agent to arrange for flights to Pakistan for the rest of the family. The jury were played extracts from the call that you, Beinash Batool, made to the travel agent and you can be heard speaking coolly and calmly, as if you did not have a care in the world. You, Urfan Sharif, can be heard urging her to book an earlier flight. This was within minutes of murdering your daughter. The other children can be heard playing in the background. In the event, the first attempt to book flights was unsuccessful, and a second booking had to be made, using Faisal Malik's credit card.
44. Then you took steps to cover up what you had done, as best you could. I have no doubt that all of you were engaged in this. Sara's body was washed, put in clean clothes, and placed in a bed. The leggings, nappy, masking tape, and hoods were put in bins. The metal pole was hidden away in an outbuilding. I have no doubt that you, Faisal Malik, were involved in this, because your McDonalds uniform was found partly in and partly next to the bins, alongside the other items. Part of the uniform was soaking wet. You, Urfan Sharif, removed the Ring doorbell to hide any video evidence. There is some evidence to suggest that a pressure washer

may have been used to clean Sara's body in the back yard of the house, but I cannot be sure of this.

45. You, Urfan Sharif, left a note on Sara's body, saying, "Whoever sees this note it's me Urfan Sharif who killed my daughter by beating. I am running away because I'm scared but I promise that I will hand over myself and take punishment." Most of this was true, but the promise was not, as you have done everything you could since the date of Sara's death to avoid punishment for your crime.
46. The following morning the three of you took all of the remaining children and drove to Heathrow Airport. You stopped on the way, Beinash Batool and Urfan Sharif, to withdraw substantial sums of money in cash from your bank accounts. You then flew to Pakistan. You had no concerns for your other children. You took them away from their friends and relatives in England, and the only place they had ever lived, because you were seeking to escape justice. You have taken no steps to assist in their return to the UK, and they are still in Pakistan. The twins have been deprived of the specialist educational support that was arranged for them in the UK.
47. Upon your arrival at Islamabad, you, Urfan Sharif, rang Surrey police. You were tearful. You told the police despatcher that you had killed your daughter and that her body could be found at the house in Horsell. You said, "I did legally punish my daughter and she died." Even then, you were trying to minimise what you had done. You said that you intended to hand yourself in, but you did not tell the police despatcher where you were. You deliberately gave the impression that you were in the UK. You lied and said that you were calling from your son's car.
48. You all then went into hiding in Pakistan. There is no extradition treaty between the UK and Pakistan. Nonetheless, the Pakistani authorities started looking for you. On 6th September, you, Beinash Batool and Urfan Sharif, took part in a bizarre video press statement in which you referred only briefly to Sara's death, saying that it was an "incident", and then spent the rest of the time complaining about the pressure that the Pakistani authorities were putting on Urfan Sharif's family.
49. Eventually, on 13 September 2023, the three of you flew back to the UK. Though you returned voluntarily, I am satisfied that none of you did so because you had

decided to own up to what you did. Rather, you left because Urfan Sharif's family instructed you to do so as a result of the heat that you were bringing down upon the wider family. You each intended to brazen it out. None of you answered any questions in police interview.

Sara

50. I now come on to say something about Sara. Photographs of her have been widely published. She was a beautiful little girl, somewhat small for her age. She was full of personality. She adored her baby brother and cared for him lovingly. Her mother, Olga Domin, said that Sara was always smiling and had her own unique character. A teaching assistant at her primary school said, "Sara was a bubbly, confident, chatty and engaging child. She would sometimes approach me and do a dance, sing something or put on a show. She was always happy in school, and you always knew when she was in the class, she had a spark. She was a little feisty and if she had an opinion, she would want to voice it and wasn't afraid to answer back."

51. It is clear that Sara stood up for herself and remained positive and cheerful in the most terrible circumstances. She was a very courageous little girl, with an unquenchable spirit. She loved to sing and dance. The jury was shown a video of Sara dancing in front of the TV a few days before she died. It is clear that, by this stage, her mobility was impaired, but, despite everything, she smiled at the camera. Amongst the most heartbreaking pieces of evidence in this case were a short story that Sara wrote which described you, Beinash Batool, as a queen who is "beautiful and young", a birthday card in which she said, "Happy Birthday Dad, I love you so much", and a letter that she wrote to you, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, in which she apologised for answering back, and said "please forgive me I am so sorry." The reality was that abuse which for anyone else would be exceptional had become normalised for this little girl. She had known nothing else for much of her life. You, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, had persuaded her that she deserved the treatment that you meted out to her.

52. A moving victim impact statement was read to the court from Sara's mother, Olga Domin. She finds it hard to understand how anyone would behave in such a way towards a small child. Ms Domin has suffered greatly as a result of Sara's death,

which has had a damaging impact upon her mental health. She had the small consolation that Sara's body was returned to her for the funeral in Poland.

Homeschooling

53. The events in this case, and in particular, the fact that Sara's school had raised safeguarding concerns, and the fact that Urfan Sharif was previously on the radar of various authorities as an alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse, inevitably raise questions about whether more could have been done to prevent the tragic consequences in this case. However, it is not my role to express an opinion on this matter, and, in any event, I do not have sufficient information to do so. That is not the purpose of the sentencing exercise. The primary responsibility for the death of Sara rests squarely with the three of you who are before me for sentencing. I will, however, make one comment. This is that this case brings into sharp relief the dangers of unsupervised homeschooling of vulnerable children. When they felt they needed to, you, Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool, were able to hide the abuse that Sara was suffering by the simple expedient of announcing that she was to be homeschooled. Of course, there are many cases in which parents take their children out of school for periods of homeschooling for good reasons and with the best of intentions, but this case starkly illustrates the dangers. It is a matter of concern that parents who are abusing or who have malign intent towards their children appear to be able to homeschool more or less at will and without supervision.

Urfan Sharif

54. I now move on to the matters that I have taken into account for sentencing each of you. I will start with you, Urfan Sharif. As I have said, the only sentence that I can pass is a sentence of life imprisonment, but I must also set a minimum term. The first step is to identify the appropriate starting point. Your offending does not come within the class of offending for which a whole life order would be appropriate. The next question is whether the starting point for the minimum term should be 30 years. This is the starting point where the court considers that the seriousness of the offence is particularly high. Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020 gives examples of cases that would normally justify a 30-year starting point. Your offending does not come within any of the specific examples set out under this category in Schedule 21. These include murders involving sexual and

sadistic conduct. However, the list in paragraph 3 of Schedule 21 of examples of cases that justify a 30-year starting point is not exhaustive. The way that you treated Sara, culminating in her murder, means that your conduct was of such seriousness as to warrant a 30-year starting point, even if the word “sadistic” is not precisely apt to describe it. It bears comparison with the other types of murder set out in Schedule 21, paragraph 3, which justify a 30-year starting point. You plainly derived grim satisfaction from your campaign of violence against Sara.

55. The starting point, therefore, is 30 years. However, the starting point is not the end point. I must also take into account the aggravating factors and, if and to the extent that there are any, the mitigating factors in your case. I say immediately that consideration of these factors will result in a substantial uplift from the starting point.

56. Beginning with the aggravating factors, I will start with those that are specifically referred to in Schedule 21. In my judgment, they are these:

(1) Your victim was particularly vulnerable due to her age. Sara was only 10 years old when she died, and was 6 or 7 when your campaign of violence began;

(2) The mental and physical suffering inflicted on the victim before death. This was extreme. I have already referred to the injuries that were inflicted on Sara, mainly by you. The assaults went on for around four years. They were accompanied by other acts of cruelty which mean that Sara must have been in a constant state of terror. You treated her as a skivvy. You took her out of school to conceal what you had done, and then made no effort to educate her. The stress caused by your treatment meant that the poor child was vomiting and soiling herself, only to find that this provoked further punishment by you. In the last few weeks, Sara was tied up and was even hooded, by a grotesque combination of parcel tape, rope, and a plastic bag. She was not even allowed to go to the toilet, but was put in pull-up nappies, and was left to wallow in her own urine and faeces. The torture got worse. She was burned with an iron and boiling water was poured on her ankles;

(3) The abuse of a position of trust. The ill-treatment took place in Sara’s own home. You were her father. You should have been her protector. It is hard to imagine a more serious breach of trust. I should add that I bear in mind the overlap between this aggravating factor and the aggravating factor relating to vulnerability due to age.

57. There are other, non-statutory, aggravating factors. They are these:

- (4) I have no doubt that you had singled out Sara amongst your children for harsh treatment, because she was a girl, and because she was not a child of your current marriage. Also, because she was prepared to stand up to you;
- (5) You used weapons, including a cricket bat, a metal pole, a hot iron, and boiling water;
- (6) You also used restraints, mainly consisting of packing tape and hoods made out of plastic bags;
- (7) The assaults took place in front of, and/or within the hearing of, the other children in the family and will have had a brutalising effect upon them. There was a suggestion during the trial that you may have recruited your oldest son to assist with the torture of Sara, but I cannot be satisfied that this happened. Nevertheless, it is clear that your older son was encouraged to bully Sara because you made clear to him that she was inferior to him;
- (8) When you came home on 8 August 2023 and found Sara very close to death, you did not call an ambulance or seek medical help. Your first reaction was to beat her with a metal rod for causing trouble. She was still conscious. This means that the last thing that Sara felt before she died will have been her own father beating her for supposedly faking injury;
- (9) As soon as you realised that you had murdered Sara, you fled abroad. I do not accept that, when you did so, you genuinely intended to return and face the music. You went into hiding in Pakistan and would still be there if your family had not pressurised you to return. When you returned, you denied everything, until six days into your evidence at trial;
- (10) You disposed of evidence linking you to the crimes, by getting rid of the mobile phones belonging to the three adults, and by removing the Ring doorbell from the front of the house;
- (11) In your attempt to escape, you uprooted your other children and took them to Pakistan, knowing that the twins have special needs which were being addressed by special educational provision in the UK;
- (12) It is a major aggravating factor that, in the period leading up to trial, and for the first six days or so of your evidence, you tried to place the blame entirely on Beinash Batool for acts that you knew very well that you had done, or had mostly done;

(13) I am satisfied that you assaulted former partners and a partner's child, and had behaved in a controlling or coercive manner towards them, though you have no convictions for this. You have a history of preying on vulnerable women, including doing so in order to obtain permanent residence in this country; and

(14) You have shown no real remorse. Right to the end of the trial, your main objective was to evade liability for your crimes. You are suffused with self-pity.

58. You have one previous conviction for theft, which is of no relevance for present purposes.

59. I have borne in mind that some of the aggravating features in this case also contributed to the conclusion that the 30-year starting point was appropriate, and so I have been careful to avoid double-counting. This applies, in particular, to the mental and physical suffering that was caused before Sara's death. Nonetheless, the degree of mental and physical suffering that you caused to Sara was, in my view, so extreme as to amount to an aggravating factor in this case, and, taken together with the other aggravating factors, means that a sentence of 30 years would not reflect the gravity of your offending.

60. There is very little indeed by way of mitigation. You were 42 years old when Sara died. You are an intelligent, educated, man. There has been no suggestion that you were suffering from any mental illness. I accept that you did not intend to kill Sara, but this is scant mitigation in these circumstances. You fully intended to hurt her, and to hurt her badly, and you did not care what the consequences for her would be. You intended that she would have a life filled with pain and misery. I also accept that Sara's murder was not premeditated, but, for the reasons just mentioned, this is of little or no value as mitigation.

Beinash Batool

61. Beinash Batool, you too have been found guilty of the murder of Sara Sharif. I have described the nature of your participation earlier in these sentencing remarks. I sentence you on the basis that your involvement in the years leading up to Sara's death consisted mainly, though not entirely, of encouraging and assisting Urfan Sharif in many of his assaults upon Sara. Indeed, during the early stages of the ill-treatment, you tried to talk Urfan Sharif out of assaulting Sara.

Nevertheless, it is clear that you valued Sara less than your other children because she was a female child who was not your natural child. You would call Urfan Sharif home when Sara was naughty, knowing and intending that he would assault her. You knew that the treatment that Sara was suffering was wrong, but, as I have said, you were prepared to sacrifice Sara because you did not really care very much about her, and were frightened of losing your own children if the scale of the abuse became known to the authorities.

62. However, you also took an active part in some of the maltreatment of Sara, towards the end of her life. It was you who bit her, on the arm and on the inner thigh, not long before she died. These were not affectionate nibbles; these were bites. Also, I can be sure that you took part in the tying up and hooding of Sara: this was not the work of one individual, and Sara was tied up even when Urfan Sharif was not in the house. Still further, I have no doubt that you were present at and involved in the burning of Sara with an iron which led to the terrible burns on her buttocks. This was a two-person job: one to hold Sara and one to press the iron onto her body.

63. You did this despite knowing that this treatment was wrong. It is clear that you were sincere when you expressed your horror and concern in the early stages about the way that Urfan Sharif treated Sara, but you did next to nothing about it, and you became used to it and complicit in it. The calm, unruffled, and chilling way in which you acted in the minutes after Sara died showed how unsurprised and unconcerned you were that the ill-treatment had resulted in her death.

64. As for the starting point for the minimum sentence: your conduct was of such seriousness as to warrant a 30-year starting point. You willingly encouraged or assisted the torture of this child for several years, and continued to encourage and assist and sometimes participated in it whilst it became ever more extreme. As with Urfan Sharif, the starting point will not be the end point.

65. The aggravating features are these:

- (1) Sara was particularly vulnerable due to her age and her position within the family;
- (2) The extreme nature of the mental and physical suffering endured by Sara (though I bear in mind the need to avoid double-counting);

- (3) The abuse of a position of trust: you were her step-mother, and the main carer in the household. The ill-treatment took place at Sara's home. You could, at an early stage, have put a stop to the hideous ill-treatment of Sara by her father, and, later, by you, which you knew full-well to be wrong. Once again, I bear in mind the overlap between this aggravating factor and the first aggravating factor, namely Sara's particular vulnerability;
- (4) Sara was singled out by you for ill-treatment, as a female child who had a different mother;
- (5) The use of weapons, including the use of an iron in which you were directly involved;
- (6) The use of restraints, which were used at times when you were the adult in charge of the house, as well as at times when Urfan Sharif was also in the house;
- (7) The assaults took place within the sight and hearing of the other children;
- (8) You took part with others in the deliberate concealment and covering up of the maltreatment which led, eventually, to Sara's murder. When she was alive you connived in the use of the hijab, dark glasses, make up and homeschooling to conceal the injuries suffered by Sara;
- (9) When you realised that Sara was dangerously ill, you did not call an ambulance, but you summoned Urfan Sharif home, knowing that he would not have Sara's best interests at heart;
- (10) You fled to Pakistan alongside Urfan Sharif and Faisal Malik in an attempt to protect Urfan Sharif from capture and to evade responsibility for your own offending. In so doing, you abandoned Sara's body. As with Urfan Sharif, I am sure that the only reason that you returned to the UK was because Urfan Sharif's family pressurised you to do so. In effect, you were given no choice;
- (11) You participated in the disposal of evidence, namely the mobile phones. It was not due to you that the WhatsApp messages were recovered. These were recovered from your sisters' phones;
- (12) You uprooted your other children and step-child from their home and their life to facilitate your escape, thereby depriving your children with disabilities of the support that was being provided to them; and
- (13) Notwithstanding what has been said on your behalf today, you have shown no credible remorse.

66. Unlike the position in relation to Urfan Sharif, in your case there are some significant mitigating features. These are:

- (1) You were not the prime mover in the assaults upon Sara. This was Urfan Sharif. Though, as I have said, you did take part in inflicting some horrible injuries on Sara, in the main your role was the secondary one of assisting and encouraging Urfan Sharif in his actions;
- (2) Unlike your husband, you did display some very occasional acts of kindness towards Sara. You sometimes put cream on her injuries, and you would sometimes buy her nice clothes or treat her well. On the whole, however, she was treated by you as the family servant, despite her very young age;
- (3) You were in a coercive and controlling relationship. You were vulnerable when you first met. He was considerably older. You were under cultural and family pressure to obey your husband and to follow his lead. I have no doubt that you feared Urfan Sharif and felt trapped into staying, especially as your father had disowned you and your family were encouraging you to stay with him, regardless of how badly he treated you and the children. You were yourself the occasional victim of abuse by Urfan Sharif. There is a reference in the WhatsApp messages, but only one, to Urfan Sharif hitting you;
- (4) You were under a great deal of strain because you were essentially the sole carer for six children in a flat and then a house which were each much too small, and you had the great additional stress of having to look after the twins with their extremely challenging behaviour;
- (5) I also accept that you had a difficult, strict and religious, upbringing. Indeed, you had been held captive by family members for some days some years previously because they considered that a previous relationship had brought shame on the family. You had been disowned and cut loose by your father because he disapproved of your lifestyle and a previous partner. You were in contact with two of your sisters and your mother, although Urfan Sharif limited this contact. It is also true that your family did not encourage you to seek assistance for Sara and, sometimes, encouraged you in the view that both you and she should put up with Urfan Sharif's treatment;
- (6) You had a medical history of depression; and

(7) You have a previous conviction for theft and fraud by false representation, but these are not relevant for present purposes. You are of effective good character.

67. However, the impact of much of this mitigation is limited. Whatever your personal predicament, and personal circumstances, you should have taken steps to stop this torture of a small child, instead of encouraging and assisting, and sometimes participating in, acts of extreme cruelty over a long period, knowing that they were very wrong. You are a strong-willed adult, aged 29 at the time of Sara's death, and you were not so cowed by Urfan Sharif's treatment of you that you were effectively prevented from speaking up. You could think for yourself, as is shown by the fact that you did, in 2022, seek advice from a solicitor about a divorce and custody of the children. You took a positive decision not to seek help for Sara because you did not want to lose your other children, but this cannot possibly amount to significant mitigation. You just did not care about Sara in the same way you cared about the other children.

68. You did not intend to kill Sara, and her killing was not premeditated by you, but, as with Urfan Sharif, this is scant mitigation. You returned voluntarily to the United Kingdom in September 2023 but, as I have said, this was the result of pressure from Urfan Sharif's family.

69. You have lost contact with your other children, and this is hard for any mother. But you chose to take them to Pakistan, knowing that efforts would be made to ensure that they did not return to the UK.

Faisal Malik

70. Faisal Malik, you have been acquitted by the jury of murder, but you have been found guilty of causing or allowing the death of a child. The Sentencing Council's guidelines for this offence draw no distinction between causing or allowing the death of a child. However, I sentence you on the basis that you did not yourself cause Sara's death but, rather, your offending consisted of failing to take reasonable steps to protect Sara from the risk of serious physical harm being caused to her by the unlawful acts of Urfan Sharif and Beinash Batool. I cannot be sure that you played any active part in the ill-treatment of Sara. Indeed, I do not believe that you did: there was no evidence at trial that you had done so.

71. I have summarised the relevant facts earlier in these sentencing remarks. You came into the family home in December 2022, some eight months before Sara's death. You were not present when the campaign of ill-treatment began. Once you took up residence in the family home, you spent much of your time there, especially during the University vacation that began in May 2023. This was the period of the worst of the torture that Sara endured. You cannot fail to have been aware of much of the terrible ill-treatment to which Sara was being regularly subjected, including beatings, burnings, and the tying up and hooding of Sara with tape and plastic bags. You stood by and did nothing.

72. I have no doubt that your offending falls within category 1A, very high culpability, in the relevant sentencing guideline. Very high culpability is indicated by the extreme character of one or more of the culpability B factors and/or by the presence of a combination of culpability B factors. One of the culpability B factors is failure to take any steps to protect the victim from offences in which other specific culpability B factors are present. This failure was extreme. Your failure was a failure to protect Sara from offences in which almost every single one of the other specific culpability B factors was present. You failed to protect Sara from prolonged and multiple incidents of serious cruelty and serious neglect; you failed to protect her from gratuitous degradation, consisting of the restraints and hooding; you failed to protect her from the use of very significant force, involving the use of weapons, namely the cricket bat, the pole, the iron, and hot water. You took absolutely no steps to protect Sara.

73. The starting point for a category 1A offence is 14 years' custody, and the range is from 12-18 years custody.

74. In your case, the aggravating factors are these:

- (1) The prolonged and exceptional suffering endured by Sara prior to her death (once again, I bear in mind the need to avoid double-counting);
- (2) The offences were committed in the presence of other children;
- (3) Failure to seek medical help;
- (4) You paid for the flights to Pakistan and helped the family to flee, fleeing yourself;
- (5) You disposed of important evidence in the form of your mobile phone; and

(6) You have shown no remorse.

75. The mitigation is very limited in your case. You were 28 years old at the time of Sara's death. You were a graduate student. Although you had only recently arrived in the UK and you were living in your brother's home, there was nothing to stop you from notifying the police of Sara's treatment. You hardly knew Urfan Sharif, and the respect you may have thought was due to your older brother was no excuse for failing to call him and his wife out in their behaviour. There is no suggestion that he bullied or threatened you. You knew the difference between right and wrong. You were not forced to stand by whilst Sara was treated in this way. I bear in mind that you are of previous good character. You returned voluntarily to the United Kingdom in September 2023 but, as I have said, this was not done out of a desire to own up to your offending; rather, it was the result of pressure from your family in Pakistan.

76. I also bear in mind that much of the abuse of Sara took place before you arrived in the UK.

77. I must consider whether you meet the criteria for dangerousness, as laid down in the Sentencing Act. If so, I would have to consider whether to impose a life sentence, or an extended sentence of imprisonment, upon you. An offender is dangerous if there is a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission by the offender of further specified offences, as defined. I have considered this matter carefully. Notwithstanding the truly horrific nature of the treatment suffered by Sara, I have concluded that you do not meet the criteria for dangerousness. There is nothing in your earlier life to suggest that you are a dangerous offender. You were not the prime mover in the ill-treatment of Sara. As I have said, there was no evidence that you took any active part in the torture of Sara. Your role in these horrific events was limited to standing by and failing to take any action to prevent them.

The Sentences

78. I now come to the sentences.

79. Urfan Sharif, for the murder of Sara Sharif, I sentence you to imprisonment for life. Taking account of all the relevant circumstances, and the aggravating and mitigating factors that I have set out, the minimum term will be **40 years**, less the time that you have served on remand. This is 38 years and 272 days.

80. Beinash Batool, for the murder of Sara Sharif, I sentence you to imprisonment for life. Taking account of all the relevant circumstances, and the aggravating and mitigating factors that I have set out, the minimum term will be **33 years**, less the time that you have spent on remand. This is 31 years and 272 days.

81. Faisal Malik, for the offence of causing or allowing the death of Sara Sharif, I sentence you to imprisonment for **16 years**, less the time that you have served on remand. You will serve up to two-thirds of your sentence in custody. You will serve the remainder on licence. You must keep to the terms of your licence and commit no further offence, or you will be liable to be recalled, and you may then serve the rest of your sentence in custody.

Commendations and thanks

82. The investigation which led to this trial and these convictions was complex and difficult. The police officers, investigators, and forensic scientists who played their part are to be commended for their exceptionally hard work, and for the extremely professional and skilful way in which they carried out their duties.

83. The officers and investigators from Surrey Police whom the Court would like publicly to commend in particular are the following:

- DCI Craig Emmerson – Senior Investigating Officer (SIO);
- DI Natalie Pearce – Deputy SIO;
- Investigating Officer (IO) Leanne Sherwood – Case officer;
- DS Mike Powell – Case Manager;
- IO Vicky Fry – Disclosure Officer;
- Vernie Govender – Analyst;

- Gemma Hazel – Crime Scene Manager;
- Rosie Arundel – Crime Scene Investigator.

84. Finally, I would like to thank all members of the counsel teams and their solicitor colleagues, for their hard work, the skilful way in which they presented their cases, and for the positive and co-operative manner in which this case was conducted. I would also like to thank the Court staff, especially the dedicated court clerk and usher, whose contributions to this case could not have been better.