



IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

REX -v- HASSAN SENTAMU

SENTENCING REMARKS

Reporting restrictions apply to protect the identities of witness under the age of 18 pursuant to s.45 Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999. Accordingly, some names have been redacted.

1. Wednesday 27 September 2023 was an ordinary school day in Croydon, South London. Elianne Andam was with her two best friends. Before going to school one of the friends S was meeting you to exchange possessions you had given each other during a short relationship that summer. She was especially keen to get her teddy bear back. They met you near the Whitgift Centre. S had brought a carrier bag of your gifts to her. You arrived with another boy who was a mutual friend K. You took the bag from S but gave her nothing in return. Instead, you walked off. The others followed. You were wearing a facemask and black gloves under which you had another pair of gloves. Concealed in your clothing you were carrying a large knife which you had taken from the kitchen at home.
2. S walked alongside you, asking for her belongings. You refused. At one point you said you didn't want to hurt her. The girls were obviously puzzled and frustrated at your behaviour and attitude. They were diligent pupils and didn't want to be late to school. As you all reached the Whitgift Centre entrance, at 8.31am, Elianne decided they didn't have time for your prevarication, and she ran past you grabbing the bag S had given you. She was laughing as she did so.
3. You ran after her, a short distance and caught her by a set of bus stops. In full view of the people milling about you took your knife and stabbed her. She dropped to the ground and scrabbled around trying to back away and fight you off while you continued to strike at her. You caused four knife wounds: on her left shoulder, her right leg and to the right side of her neck, severing the carotid artery. Elianne received immediate first aid from Samuel Sinclair, a London bus driver who was a passenger on one of the buses stopped nearby, three London Ambulance Service crews and the Helicopter Emergency Medical services all responding rapidly to the many 999 calls made by members of the public who saw the attack. Sadly, the injury to Elianne's neck caused catastrophic bleeding and would have been fatal, even with immediate expert medical intervention. She died at 9.21am close to where she had been assaulted.

4. In the meantime, you had run off with the knife, which you hid behind a garden wall. You threw away the mask and gloves. During your attempt to escape you changed your upper clothing and caught two buses towards your home address. Due to swift police action, you were arrested in New Addington at 9.45am. You gave a false name, and later a false location for the knife, but it was eventually found by following your route on CCTV.
5. Elianne Andam was 15 years old when you murdered her. She will always remain just 15. She will never realise the potential of her life. The court has heard moving tributes to a hard-working, happy girl who lived life to the full and made life worth living for those around her. The pain of her loss to her parents and younger brother is indescribable and they feel it in every room of their home. There will be no more holidays, birthdays and everyday life together, enriched by her joyful presence. Her father says she was a kind, beautiful girl who was always there for others when she was needed. Her mother recalls Elianne's big dreams, to change the world, to become a lawyer and fight for justice. Her friend S says Elianne used to stick up for her and protect her. She has been left with post-traumatic stress disorder from watching her friend killed. The third girl with them does not believe the trauma they suffered will ever diminish. A year after Elianne died a large mural was unveiled in Croydon close to the bus-stop. It shows a lovely teenager full of life and purpose with a radiant smile. Its presence marks the determination of the community to declare to young men like you, as forcefully as they can, *"Put the knives down."*
6. And who are you Hasan Sentamu? You are now 18. You had your 17th birthday on 6 September 2023. You have not had the benefit of a settled and nurturing, childhood and family life. You moved to England from Uganda when you were aged 5. You went back to Uganda aged 11, for a few months where you said you had been physically abused. On your return you were withdrawn, you harmed yourself and, unprovoked, assaulted other children at school. A referral was made to Croydon Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and they had intermittent contact with you thereafter. In November that year you had to be disarmed when you took a knife to school, produced it in a lesson and said you wanted to kill yourself. For that you received a youth conditional caution aged 12.
7. From February 2019 to December 2021, you were placed in foster care after complaints about your mother's neglect. She was bringing up a family of four children on her own and she said you were beyond her control. While in foster care you used a knife to threaten a pupil who you thought was mocking you on a school trip. You were excluded and placed in a Pupil Referral Unit where your behaviour continued to be disruptive and aggressive. In June 2019 when you had been admitted to a mainstream school in Croydon you threatened to stab another

student with scissors. On another occasion you assaulted two female pupils at the school. You continued to express a wish to harm yourself.

8. In 2020 you were moved to a school for students with special educational needs. In May 2021 an Education, Health and Care Plan was prepared for you and later that year you returned to live with your mother and sisters although you were still unable to control your temper. In August 2023 you moved to Croydon College to start a sports course.
9. The jury saw and heard footage from the afternoon before the murder of Elianne Andam when you were with your friend K in the Whitgift Centre. A group of girls, including Elianne and S challenged and criticised you for your treatment of S at the end of your relationship. I have no doubt that you felt mocked and humiliated. This encounter did not involve any threats to harm you, but the girls threw water at you and teased you about your physical appearance and special educational needs history. You handled the situation calmly, but afterwards you told your friend K you couldn't let that experience slide. He knew you well and recognised the danger, telling you not to do "*anything dumb*", not to ruin your chances in life. You did not take his wise advice.
10. You did not give evidence at your trial. Your accounts to the doctors who have examined you since your arrest for murder have not been consistent and even now you say the attack itself is a blur. It remains the position that only you really know what led you to take a knife and prepare yourself with a mask and two pairs of gloves when going to meet your ex-girlfriend and her friends that morning. But you must have picked up the knife deliberately knowing that you were meeting girls who were not any physical threat to you at all.
11. The law allows no other sentence for murder than a life sentence which for someone aged under 18 at the time of the offence is detention during His Majesty's Pleasure. A minimum term must be set, which does not in any way equate to the value of the life of Elianne Andam. It is what Parliament has said must be the outcome for someone of your age at the time of the murder. There is no automatic release in a case of murder and the law is that you will spend every day of the minimum term in custody before you can apply for release to the Parole Board. The Board can only direct release if it is satisfied that imprisonment is no longer necessary for the protection of the public. If you are released the second part of the sentence begins which is supervision, subject to licence conditions restricting your freedom, and a life-long liability to be recalled to prison.
12. The focus in identifying the appropriate minimum term is the seriousness of the offence. The starting point for the minimum term for a murder committed by

someone who is 17 years old is 14 years. In your case the starting point is well beyond that because I have no doubt you took a knife to the place where you killed Elliane Andam, and your purpose was to have it available to use as a weapon. Parliament has determined that in these circumstances a 9-year increase to 23 years is required to mark society's abhorrence of knife crime and to act as a deterrent. Nonetheless every perpetrator is an individual, as is every victim and it has been argued that it would be just to mark the fact that you crossed this age threshold only a few weeks before the killing, by reducing the starting point for that reason. It is observed that had you still been 16 years old at the time, the starting point would have been 17 years. That starting point is for all 15 and 16-year-olds. The relevant starting point applies unless there is a good reason for disapplying it. It is a sad fact of our time, that many families lose loved ones because a young man aged 17 or under has carried a knife in public and used it. Any starting point is subject to adjustment if justice requires it. In my judgment, taking into account everything I know about you and your offence, it is not appropriate to make any adjustment to the starting point. I deal separately with the question of your maturity.

13. Next, I consider whether any aggravating and mitigating features present should lead to an increase or decrease from the starting point. I have had the benefit of reading a pre-sentence report prepared by the Youth Justice Service in Croydon and a letter you have written to me. I have also seen the many certificates and commendations you have achieved, to your credit, while remanded in custody at Oakhill Secure Training Centre. I have listened carefully to the submissions made by counsel.
14. While there was a degree of planning and premeditation as already set out, it is not accurately categorised as significant in the context of an offence which attracts the starting point identified. However, there are features that justify increasing the severity of the sentence. Your victim was a 15-year-old girl, unarmed, wearing her school uniform and on her way to school among the morning commuters. Several other children witnessed the unprovoked attack on their friend. Finally, you disposed of incriminating evidence quickly afterwards.
15. Turning to mitigation, despite the number of blows you struck to Elianne with the large knife, the wounds you caused were not grave, except for the fatal one. The evidence indicates an intention to cause really serious harm, but this is a case in which the impact of a lack of proven intent to kill, is close to neutral because of the nature of the weapon used and the fact of the chase and repeated blows to a defenceless girl.
16. I have in mind the definitive guideline which assists judges dealing with offenders with mental or developmental disorders and neurological impairments.

Culpability, that means the degree of responsibility you have for your actions in killing Elianne Andam, may be reduced by reason of any impairment or disorder you were suffering from at the time, but this only applies if there is a sufficient connection between the impairment or disorder and the offending behaviour. You were diagnosed with a neuro-developmental condition, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in July 2019. The testing resulted in a score of 7 out of 24, which is at the very threshold for the diagnosis. When you were assessed again before the trial your score was 9. By the jury's verdict, ASD had not substantially impaired your ability to exercise self-control when you killed Elianne. I have reminded myself of the psychological and psychiatric evidence called at the trial. As well as ASD you meet the criteria for a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and during your childhood you displayed traits of conduct disorder, including aggression, which if it persists may emerge in adulthood as anti-social personality disorder.

17. In my judgment none of those conditions impaired your ability at the relevant time, to exercise appropriate judgment, make rational choices including to control yourself, or understand the consequences of your actions. Put simply, the psychologists and psychiatrists who reported to the court agreed that you have social communication difficulties which make it harder for you to respond normally to complex social situations, but the driver of this offence was not communication difficulties, and you were not, on the morning of 27 September 2023, in a complex social situation.
18. In my judgment the driver of your actions was your short temper and your aggressive tendencies, described by Professor Blackwood as personality issues over which you have control, combined with your deliberate decision to carry a knife. This is confirmed by the fact that you were not in an emotionally disturbed state when you were arrested and by that point you had phoned your friend K and communicated with another girl you had planned to see later that day. Furthermore, a consultant child psychiatrist who saw you after your arrest concluded that there was no evidence of any kind of acute mental disorder at the time. There is therefore an insufficient connection to be drawn between your mental health and this offence of murder.
19. I do take into account as mitigation that you have no previous criminal convictions. I also take into account that you came to the attention of social services as a young child, you were the subject of child protection plans because you suffered neglect and other disturbing childhood experiences which caused trauma and interfered with your development.
20. I have reminded myself of the Guideline on Sentencing Children and Young people because considerations of maturity, insight and understanding do not end

once an offender reaches the age of 18. From all the evidence in the trial overall, I find that your emotional immaturity is somewhat greater than that of a typical person of your age and you are less able than others to express yourself and understand the thoughts and feelings of others. You have not yet fully developed the ability to cope with your own strong feelings such as those of worthlessness. These features provide personal mitigation.

21. You have written to me to express remorse, and you say you hope to live a better life in the future as penitence for the very bad choices you have made. I discern from your letter and the pre-sentence report, some positive indications that you are slowly gaining valuable insight into your responsibility for your actions and the capacity you have to change. You are still young, and despite what you have said and written in the past, your life has value. It is up to you make it as good as possible.
22. After carefully weighing and balancing all the significant features of the case, I come back to 23 years as the just minimum term.
23. As that minimum term must represent the time you actually spend in custody, I deduct the 531 days between your remand and today's sentencing hearing which counsel have calculated. If that figure needs amendment the case must be listed as soon as possible for it to be done.
24. All the medical reports served in the trial, together with the pre-sentence report and a copy of these sentencing remarks must be passed to the custodial setting where you are placed after this hearing.
25. Stand up Hasan Sentamu. You have taken the life of a precious child. You have devastated the lives of those who knew and loved Elianne Andam, a bright, kind and loyal 15-year-old girl on her way to school with her friends. The responsibility for Elianne's death will be with you for the rest of your days.
26. The sentence is detention at His Majesty's Pleasure. For the murder of Elianne Andam on 27 September 2023, you will be detained for at least 23 years which means, after counting the days served so far, a minimum term of 21 years and 199 days.
27. For the offence of possession of a bladed article, a category A1 offence in the relevant guideline, the sentence is 1 year concurrent to the life sentence for murder.

28. You must go down now.

29. In addition to commending the swift and brave action of Samuel Sinclair, who was with Elianne when she lost consciousness and who gave evidence at the trial, the court commends the thorough police investigation. DC Ashleigh Nelson and DC Kristy Thom who were responsible for the CCTV evidence and the presentation of the s28 recordings deserve special recognition. The court praises the rapid deployment of all the emergency services and their efforts to save Elianne's life. Finally, it is right to recognise the burden of these proceedings on Elianne's family and the friends who gave evidence, some of them on more than one occasion. I hope that as they leave court today, they can leave Hassan Sentamu here, knowing they have done all they can to achieve justice for Elianne.

Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb

13 March 2025