



IN THE CROWN COURT AT SHEFFIELD

REX -v- MOHAMMAD SOHAIL FAROOQ

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Mohammad Farooq, you are 29 years old and have no previous convictions. On 2 July last year, at the conclusion of your trial at Sheffield Crown Court you were convicted of the principal charge you faced, namely engaging in conduct in preparation for giving effect to your intention to commit acts of terrorism, contrary to s.5 Terrorism Act 2006. I must now sentence you for that offence which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. I have also to deal with you for related matters to which you pleaded guilty namely, possessing a record of information likely to be of use to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism (Count 2), possessing an explosive with intent to endanger life (Count 3), possessing an explosive in suspicious circumstances (Count 4), having an imitation firearm with intent to commit an offence or resist arrest (Count 5) and possessing a firearm with intention to cause fear of violence (count 6.) Please sit down.
2. Having presided over your trial I am sure of the following facts:
 1. In the early hours of Friday 20 January 2023, when you were 26, you were arrested outside the Gledhow Wing of St James' Hospital in Leeds. You knew the hospital well and had been a clinical support worker there.
 2. You had with you an improvised explosive device, a bomb. You had created it from a pressure cooker, especially purchased for the purpose, and nearly 10kg of explosive which you had extracted from £600 worth of fireworks. You had been carrying it around in your car from mid-December the previous year.
 3. You were also in possession of an imitation firearm which you had painted black to make it look more realistic. In the same bag as the bomb, you had a knife and black tape.
 4. From 2020 to 2022 you became radicalised and a supporter of Islamist extremism. You were disillusioned in your own life, both personally and professionally having failed to achieve the necessary standard of work to become a nurse. You executed a plan of harassment of your colleagues at the hospital and eventually, you decided to commit acts of terrorism in this country by using explosives to cause death and or serious injury.
 5. In the two years up to the Autumn of 2022 you variously engaged in:
 - i. Researching topic such as violent jihad against unbelievers, the caliphate, primary explosives, improvised munitions, how to convert blank-firing guns, Al Qaeda, how to make anthrax, chemical nerve agents including sarin an extremely toxic compound and poisons, martyrdom and the Finsbury Park Mosque attack.

- ii. Viewing anti-West propaganda videos, including from Islamic State and the hate-preacher Anwar Al-Awlaki, inciting violence against America.
 - iii. Downloading a Munitions Handbook and the Anarchist Cookbook.
 - iv. Trying to cover your tracks by downloading a VPN and the TOR network which enables browsing of the dark web. You also searched for military grade encryption software.
 - v. Purchasing an imitation firearm as well as two gun-holsters, and blank firing ammunition
 - vi. Painting the gun to make it look more realistic
 - vii. Acquiring instructions for the preparation of an improvised explosive device (IED) from the Inspire magazine produced by Al Qaeda and other places on the internet
 - viii. Researching fireworks shops in Leeds and purchasing a large metal pressure cooker
 - ix. Obtaining the ingredients of black powder explosive
6. From September 2022 you spent time off sick after being challenged about your misconduct towards colleagues and you last worked at St James' Hospital before Christmas 2022. After that until your arrest on 20 January you were deceiving your family, telling them you were working while not actually turning up at work.
7. In November 2022 you downloaded a 62 page document written by Al Qaeda's chief intelligence officer which has the title '*Safety and security guidelines for lone wolf mujahadeen*'. You began to search for the Menwith Hill Royal Air Force Base near Harrogate which provides support for UK and USA military. You then accessed a range of material including TikTok videos that mention the base and refer to it being used by the United States for operations against Islamists in the Middle East including an article stating that Islamic State had named RAF Menwith Hill as one of its targets for attack. You then made searches using the term '*Isis lone wolf hitlist*'.
8. By December you had assembled all the components for the IED and built it following the instructions in the AQ Inspire magazine article –'*How to make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom*'.
9. On 18 December you carried out 24 searches about the RAF base including for the B6451 which runs alongside it. On Christmas eve you wrote a note on your phone which reads like a suicide martyrdom letter. In it you said the one thing you wanted was to die with honour and courage. You referred to suffering in the Muslim world, many of your brothers being massacred and your sisters being held captive, that it was time to stand up and fight back.
10. Your first known trip to Menwith Hill was on 10 January 2023. It is a highly secure location with a protective wire-wall, and not easily accessible. You drove around it and the area for about four hours from 9am. The second trip was late at night on 18 January, and you spent nearly two hours in the area leaving at around 1.20am the following day.
11. Late at night on 19 January, you went to St James' Hospital despite having called in to say that you were sick and would not be attending for the 7.30am shift. Near the hospital, you downloaded a voice changer app and

attempted to record a bomb warning. In each message recovered from your telephone you said there was a bomb or a pressure cooker bomb on the ward and everyone should be evacuated. I accept that what was in your mind was not to save lives, but to attack and murder those being evacuated, with the IED and knives that you had with you when you arrived shortly after recording the messages. You didn't send the audio messages but at 11.45pm you sent a text to a nurse colleague who worked on the same ward as you, J28, which said, "*I have placed a pressure cooker bomb on J28. It will detonate in one hour. Let's see how many lives you will save.*" You sat in the hospital car park in your car with the bomb and knives waiting for the evacuation to begin. Fortunately, the colleague did not see the message for over an hour. There was no immediate evacuation, and you were not able to achieve the movement of large numbers of vulnerable patients and staff out of the hospital. When evacuation did occur, it was contained within the hospital.

12. At about 1.45am you went into the hospital, not to Ward J28 but to the Gledhow Wing which houses other wards and the maternity services. You spent about 12 minutes inside. When you left the wing a patient who was outside noticed you and began a conversation. You were standing with the bomb in a black holdall, looking distressed. Mr Nathan Newby's intervention, unknown to that modest and gentle man, whose evidence was amongst the most remarkable the court has ever heard, led to you telling him your intention to kill people at the hospital, showing him the bomb in the bag and eventually even the imitation firearm you had in your jacket. You explained the significant blast radius your device would have. You said you were going to walk through the main doors to the Wing, past the lifts to the canteen where you would wait for all the staff to come, detonate the bomb when the canteen was full of nurses, and walk out. He remained calm while you complained about hospital staff. You later confessed that in the nearly two hours he spent with you in the early hours of that day, he had 'talked' you 'down' by staying with you, listening to you and telling you to think of your own children.
13. At 4.21am you told him to call 999 before you changed your mind and he did so, using your phone, explaining that he was with someone who was upset and feeling like killing everyone. Shortly afterwards you were arrested by armed police.
14. Subsequent searches revealed that although you had been living with your parents, your wife and your two children during this period, you were spending a lot of time alone and in your car. This life-style was coming to a necessary end because the lease had expired and by January the car company was seeking to re-possess it. Your deception about going to work would be discovered.
15. The pressure cooker bomb was examined by an expert, and it was viable. You had put nearly 10kg of low explosive mix removed from fireworks inside it, with a length of fuse running through one of the pressure valves to a secondary charge made from a bundle of fuses. A match was taped to the cooker. When detonated the device would have caused a significant

explosion with metal fragments being ejected indiscriminately at high speed with the potential to cause death to those in proximity. You had gone to considerable effort to prepare an IED in line with the instructions in the illustrated Inspire magazine article, experimenting with different constituent parts. Several hundred firework tubes were required and each had to be emptied into the pressure cooker at a risk to you, especially as it accumulated. You had persisted until the gunpowder almost filled the pressure cooker and could easily have been ignited by a match travelling along the fuse. The expert evidence was that because fuses burn at different times it is possible that when ignited the device could have exploded before you would be able to make your escape.

3. The purpose of sentence in a case such as this is to punish, deter and incapacitate whilst ensuring that the ultimate and total sentence is not disproportionate. It is a very serious matter to endanger the security of the state by bringing terror to the streets of our country. Psychiatric issues aside, comprehensive assistance on sentence for offences contrary to s.5 of the 2006 Act is found in the relevant Sentencing Council Guideline. Your preparations were complete, and multiple deaths were risked and very likely to be caused. They were not caused because you did not find a way to get into RAF Menwith Hill, but this did not discourage you. You changed course and decided to carry out an atrocity at the place where dedicated staff look after vulnerable ill citizens. There you were waiting for the shift change when you could do so maximum damage to human life because staff would be milling about but as you waited you were persuaded, at the last moment, to give yourself up.
4. The starting point is at A1 because you acted alone but your preparation was complete. If, as intended, you had detonated the bomb either in the RAF base or the hospital multiple deaths would have been risked and highly likely to be caused. I reject the argument that your voluntary desisting from detonating the device means the correct category for harm is category 3. This offence punishes the preparation of terrorist acts. If you had carried on with your intention, and survived the blast, you would almost certainly have been facing mandatory life sentences for murder. In that sense your responsibility is not reduced by the fact that you lost your bottle and were persuaded, while in emotional turmoil, to stand down and let Mr Newby call the police. It is the harm intended that is relevant ie the level of harm you intended to cause judged from your perspective when you were at brink of detonating the device. A similar analysis applies for count 3. In light of the conviction, I reject the argument that the material concerned in count 2 was not for terrorist use and therefore no harm was likely or if likely was in category 3. This was a category B2 offence.
5. You are an isolated individual terrorist, not part of any cell and no evidence was found of direct contact with other terrorists, but the s.5 offence is aggravated by your use of technology to impede detection of your internet history and, to a degree, the other offences which you admitted. Your selection of a military target, particularly chosen because of the involvement of an international ally, the USA at that base, is also an aggravating feature as is the subsequent targeting of a hospital and your repeated accessing and possession of extremist material.

6. The jury heard detailed evidence of your conduct at work in the hospital because it was central to your defence. I must briefly set out my findings about it. Since October 2021 you had been harassing members of staff who you thought had wronged you, at the hospital. You sent malicious emails to them deploying an encrypted email address you created for the purpose and sending them when computers were logged in on the ward. You would log in and interfere with staff members' accounts, deleting emails or obtaining personal information such as national insurance numbers and bank account details. You were confronted about this behaviour and took sick leave. When you went back in June 2022 the malicious messages resumed. The hospital's cyber security department investigation was ineffective. On all the evidence I am sure that there was no basis for the grievances you had towards the nursing staff. Every effort was made to encourage and help you. You were given many opportunities to re-start the courses, and provided with support but you lacked commitment and didn't put the work in. I make it clear that I do not treat this behaviour as an aggravating feature of the matters I have to sentence you for. You were entitled to ask the jury to consider your defence.
7. In terms of mitigation, again psychiatric issues aside, I take into account your lack of previous convictions and the difficult childhood experiences I have read about which included being bullied at school, self-harming, short periods of sexual abuse of a non-penetrative nature by two female relatives, and physical and emotional abuse by your father.
8. The state of your mental health has been the focus of much attention before and since your conviction. I have well in mind the guideline that assists judges in assessing the impact of mental or developmental disorders and neurological impairments. The guideline makes it clear that while any disorder or mental ill-health should be considered, it will not necessarily have any impact on the sentence. Culpability, the degree of responsibility for an offender's actions, may be reduced by reason of any impairment or disorder he was suffering from at the time, but this only applies if there is a sufficient connection between the impairment or disorder and the offending behaviour.
9. In some cases, an offender's responsibility can be substantially reduced by mental disorder. It is submitted that in your case there are exceptional circumstances concerning your mental health which justify not imposing the minimum term otherwise reached by application of the guideline, or the mandatory minimum term for a serious terrorism offence of 14 years, because to do so would result in an arbitrary and disproportionate sentence. The delay between conviction and sentence has been caused by those who represented you at the trial, and a new team instructed by you since, seeking further expert evidence. Despite the time taken only one new report has been served. The court has read four reports and four addenda obtained by the defence, and one report from the prosecution.
10. I observe that the latest psychological report assessed you in something of a vacuum, not having been given full details of the facts and history of the case, and the pre-trial reports were in advance of the jury's verdict, so the experts gave their opinions on the defence that failed in the trial. In these respects, the reports are of limited utility. In short, the relevant findings are that although a full clinical

assessment has not been carried out, you are likely to have autism spectrum disorder, a neuro-developmental disorder which is not a mental illness. I proceed on the basis that this is correct. In your case the ASD has not interfered with your intellectual development, but you do have difficulties engaging with other people and tend towards ruminating on perceived injustices over a long period of time. You have personality disorder traits of paranoia and narcissism. Mr Khan KC refined his argument during oral submissions. He characterises the relevance of ASD as mitigation rather than effecting culpability or harm intended.

11. You reported symptoms of depression before the offences. You are depressed in prison and do not accept the outcome of the trial. In respect of your visits to RAF Menwith Hill while you had the improvised explosive device in your car, you maintain the account you gave at one stage in your defence statements that those trips were to do with a paid commission you had to carry out computer hacking into the systems there. As to taking the device to detonate it at the hospital, that was borne out of grievances with the staff and nothing to do with terrorism. You had every opportunity to put your case forward at the trial. You did not give evidence and called no evidence to support computer hacking commissions.
12. Although a quantity of material has been put before the court about the difficulties those with ASD may face in custody there is no evidence that you have had any problems yourself with eg being manipulated by other prisoners or struggling to make social contacts. You are housed in an ordinary, non-medical wing and spend your time reading in your cell. The prison authorities must ensure you are suitably accommodated and cared for. The various reports served and a copy of these sentencing remarks must go with you into custody. I recognise that you are a suicide risk given your history of self-harming.
13. Finally in respect of mitigation, in written submissions it was urged on your behalf, by counsel instructed since your conviction, that I should sentence you on the basis that your actions in committing all the offences before me were driven by a desire to feel empowered against people who have perpetrated injustices against you rather than ideology. Orally, counsel recognised the immovable obstacle to this core submission, namely the verdict of the jury.
4. I have given all these matters the most careful consideration. Including the submissions made about them. In my judgment you were approaching a personal crisis by early 2023 because your life-style, unjustified animus and failures at work were likely to be exposed. At the same time, you had become radicalised, and you decided the time was right to act on your belief that you should take action against the West, as represented by a military base nearby. Your ASD and other personality traits mean you are someone who can become very focussed on topics you are interested in. This means there may be an indirect connection between ASD and your offending but it is important to note that there is no evidence at all that your particular ASD traits, impaired your ability to understand the nature of your conduct, exercise self-control or form rational judgments when you decided to whether to take action in line with your ideological views. I do not find this to be a case in which your acts were caused or compelled by mental illness or ASD.
5. Your undoubted depression and alienation provides, with the other features I have already listed, some mitigation which I reflect by not going outside the bracket for an A1 offence which would otherwise be merited in this most grave case.

14. My concluded view is that you are a dangerous offender. That term has a particular meaning, and the test is whether you are someone who poses a significant risk of causing serious harm by committing specified offences in the future. As a radicalised extremist who does not accept the jury's verdict, I am sure that you do present precisely that risk. In view of the level of danger that you pose, and the impossibility of predicting when that will come to an end this is a case in which it is necessary to impose a sentence of life imprisonment.
15. By reference to all the evidence in the case, I reject the argument made in writing that there are exceptional circumstances for not imposing the minimum term.
16. I will fix a minimum term every day of which must be served because there is no automatic release. After serving the minimum term you will be able to apply for release, to the Parole Board. The Board can only direct release if it is satisfied that keeping you in custody is no longer necessary for the protection of the public. If released, the second part of the sentence begins which is supervision, subject to licence conditions restricting your freedom. Breach of the licence at any time in your life will make you liable to be recalled to prison.
17. The sentences I impose for the other offences you have been convicted of will all be served concurrent to the sentence on the s.5 offence. Accordingly, I have taken them into account in reaching the appropriate minimum term on your life sentence. The concurrent sentences recognise that you pleaded guilty and, (except for count 3) you accepted the full facts of the prosecution's case on those counts. I have given a one quarter discount. Count 3 obviously overlaps with count 1. You initially pleaded guilty to count 3 on the basis that you had the explosive to scare rather than to detonate and no terrorist intent. Later you admitted you had intended to detonate the device in the hospital, but claimed your intention was not a terrorist one, it was to kill nurses as revenge for what you considered their mistreatment of you.
18. I am satisfied that the offences under the Explosive Substances Act 1883 and the Firearms Act 1968 to which you pleaded guilty had a terrorist connection within the meaning of s.69(3) Sentencing Act 2020 in that they were committed for the purpose of terrorism. This is an aggravating feature in each one.
19. I take count 1 as the lead offence and the starting point for an A1 offence. The minimum term must be the least appropriate to the gravity of the offending and account for the aggravating and mitigating features I have set out, as well as the additional criminality relating to the imitation firearm and collection of terrorist material, I have taken care to avoid double counting and checked to ensure the total sentence I pass is just and proportionate to your offending overall.
20. I order deprivation of the items seized from you or from places connected with you, which were used or intended to be used for the purpose of these offences. The schedule is agreed, and my order covers everything on it. I impose the victim surcharge. Notification requirements under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 will apply to you for the next 30 years.
21. **Mohammad Farooq.** You were prepared to do the unthinkable. To explode a bomb in a hospital. But that was just your plan B. Your original target was the RAF base at Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire. You had set out to create a bomb with double the power of the one detonated at the Boston Marathon in 2013. That bomb killed three people and injured over 250. You were inspired by Islamic State to harm this

country's military forces but having realised it would be impossible to get into a position to detonate your device anywhere closer than the well-protected perimeter, you changed tack to a softer target. You had a grievance towards nursing staff at Jimmy's, the well-loved Leeds hospital, and had been conducting a malicious cyber campaign against them, so you took your weapon there. In the early hours of the morning, having failed to cause an evacuation by a bomb threat, you were hanging about until the shift turned over and staff would be milling around. This was deliberately to cause maximum damage to life. But at the end, your courage failed you and the kind thoughtfulness of a passing stranger saved you and those you targeted.

22. You prevaricated in your defence but in the end the jury rejected your final position, that your aim was not a terrorist purpose. I agree with the jury's verdict and am bound by it in any event. Your motives may well have been mixed, and included a personal, unjustified grievance, why else choose Jimmy's for plan B, but that doesn't diminish the gravity of preparing a viable bomb and being on the brink of detonating it to advance the abhorrent ideological and religious cause of Islamic extremism.

1. On count 1 the sentence is **life imprisonment** with a minimum term calculated from 37 years. Because that is the exact period you must serve, I have to allow for the days you have already spent in custody. These have been calculated as 791 days. If that is incorrect the case must be listed as soon as possible for it to be corrected. Accordingly, **the minimum term is 34 years and 304 days.**

2. All the remaining sentences are concurrent to the life sentence. For count 2 the sentence is 4 years imprisonment.

3. On count 3 the sentence is same as for count 1 because you had the explosive for a terrorist purpose.

4. On count 4 it is appropriate to impose no separate penalty because the offending is already dealt with in count 1

5. On count 5, a high culpability offence because of the context in which it was carried and harm category 3 aggravated by the terrorist connection, the sentence is 5 years imprisonment.

6. For count 6 sentence is likewise, 5 years imprisonment.

23. In your presence I strongly commend the actions and character of Mr Nathan Newby. He is an extraordinary, ordinary man whose decency and kindness on 20 January 2023 prevented an atrocity in the maternity wing of a major British hospital.

Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb

21 March 2025