

## **R v Rawal Rehman**

### **Sentencing remarks**

#### **Manchester Crown Court**

#### **His Honour Judge Alan Conrad KC**

**27<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

Rawal Rehman, you have pleaded guilty to causing the death of Louisa Palmisano by dangerous driving.

#### **The Facts**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2025 Mr Renzo Palmisano and his wife Pilar Rivera drove to Manchester with their 3-year-old daughter, Louisa - known as Lulu - to spend a family day in the city centre at the end of half term. They also had an appointment at Friends Meeting House which was being used as part of the Peruvian Consulate, to renew or apply for paperwork for Mr Palmisano and Lulu. At 10am the family were walking along towards Mosley Street towards Piccadilly, they were both holding Lulu's hand and Lulu was wearing a baby harness for added protection, which was held by her mother. CCTV-which I have seen – and which shows events from different angles- shows a happy family walking along the street.

They saw a tram coming in their direction on the opposite side of the road, stopped to watch it and then saw a van coming across the path of the tram.

The van had ignored the clearest signs and road markings ordering a stop . It appeared to Mrs Rivera that the van accelerated to miss the tram and the driver appeared to be looking down. The van was then suddenly propelled towards the family. Mrs Rivera ended up on her knees on the ground, Mr Palmisano was

knocked over, and Lulu was dragged under the van. Mrs Rivera described the van going over her daughter *“more than once”* -a memory that stays with her . The tram was driven by Adnan Haider. He described how he was driving the tram along Mosely Street, heading towards the junction of Nicholas Street at a speed below the 15 mph limit. He sounded the tram’s whistle as he approached Nicholas Street to warn traffic of his presence and took extra care to look down Nicholas Street to check for traffic. There were no vehicles visible. Out of of his left side peripheral vision he saw your van travelling towards him at speed and before Mr Haider could react, the van struck the tram. Mr Haider applied the hazard brake and saw that the tram had struck the middle back area of the van, which had mounted the pavement on the Booth Street side of the junction. Mr Haider described himself as being immediately very shaken up by this and he then heard a female screaming and saw a child under the passenger side of the van. Mr Haider contacted his control room to request an ambulance. He then took all 10 passengers off the tram - fortunately none of them were injured.

Quite apart from the great gravity of this case , it follows that there could easily have been more casualties .

There were a number of pedestrian eye witnesses to the collision, who described how the van drove *“fairly fast”* straight past the stop sign and did not appear to make any attempt to slow down. Eden Ferno described how he had to jump out of the way of the careering van. Katie Pretherick described the van travelling at approximately 20 mph and said that the brake lights were not illuminated prior to the collision. She also concluded *“it is clear the van driver either felt they could make it across the road before the tram, they were distracted by something, or they were under the influence, which caused them*

to react differently". Kristian Harmelink witnessed the collision, he spoke to you, telling you to stay in the van.

You , however got out of the van on the passenger side – got back in to retrieve your phone- and left .

Thinking only of yourself you fled the scene leaving Lulu and parents there - in contrast those at the scene tried to assist .

The parents in their ABE interviews set out in heartbreaking terms what happened at the roadside and then at hospital . Sadly nothing could be done to save Lulu .

I have heard and taken into account the moving and heartfelt joint VPS from both parents .Lulu in her short life brought enormous joy to those who knew and loved her.Her death – and the manner of her death - have caused continuing and lasting heartbreak for her family.

No sentence that I impose can begin to equate to the loss of a young life .

In addition to the harm suffered by the family the terrible spectacle of this awful collision was witnessed by many and will have affected them – and in particular the driver of the tram who had no chance of avoiding the impact .

You were arrested two days later and gave a prepared statement but made no comment in interview.

### **Antecedents**

You are 36 years of age and have a long and serious criminal record . It is in the main for drug offences -in particular in 2018 for conspiracy to supply Class A and B controlled drugs , you were sentenced to a total of 11 years and 3 months imprisonment, in respect of which sentence you were on licence when you committed this offence. Of note on your record are convictions -albeit a long time ago - in 2007 for failing to stop and other road traffic offences and

more recently in 2017 for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, an offence in which you burned a Porsche motor car which had been involved in a fatal collision. That conviction shows a willingness to assist a driver who had killed somebody with their motor car.

In addition the facts of this case show that you had spent the night before this incident in establishments in which you had consumed a very large quantity of cocaine- in the first as evidenced by one of the workers there twenty lines of cocaine and in the second establishment, which you left only minutes before this incident, on your own admission, one or two further lines. You had had no sleep that night because of the activities that you chose to undertake.

Your fleeing the scene means that no toxicology is available but I infer from the evidence so that I am sure that your ability to drive was highly impaired by the consumption of drugs and that that was one of the reasons why you fled the scene.

### **Definitive Guideline**

I turn to consider the definitive guideline for the offence of causing death by dangerous driving

I have taken into account the submissions on both sides and I am satisfied that this case comes within Culpability A –the following factors are present:

- A deliberate decision to ignore rules of the road and disregard for the risk of danger to others.
- An obviously highly dangerous manoeuvre.
- Your driving being highly impaired due to consumption of drugs.

The Starting Point after a trial is 12 years custody

The Category Range – 8 to 18 years custody

### **Aggravating factors**

They are as follows:

- Your previous convictions In particular-failing to stop and perverting the course of justice
- Your victim was a vulnerable road user.  
You were driving a goods vehicle
- You failed to stop.  
You were on license at the time

Those aggravating factors take this offence to a point at or near the top of the category range

### **Mitigating factors:**

I take into account the points made on your behalf by Mr Toal and in particular the references submitted which I have read, that you made some progress on licence following your release , and that you have shown some remorse.

### **Sentence**

The mitigation brings the sentence down to one of 16 years imprisonment after a trial.

I apply a reduction of one quarter for your guilty plea timed as it was , resulting in a sentence of 12 years imprisonment

I have considered the dangerousness provisions under sections 266 to 268 and section 306 of the Sentencing Code 2020 and I am satisfied that this sentence in any event, even were there a finding of dangerousness, would be sufficient to protect the public.

Accordingly the sentence for this offence is a standard determinate sentence of 12 years imprisonment of which you will serve two thirds less any time that you have spent in custody before you are released on licence which will continue until the end of the 12 year term.

This offence carries a mandatory disqualification of at least five years and the intention of the court is that there be a disqualification on your release of six years ,less the five weeks that has been ordered as an interim disqualification

That disqualification has to be extended to allow for the time that you will spend in custody which is 8 years less the three months and three days since your arrest.

Accordingly the disqualification will be 13 years 272 days, from which there will be a further reduction of 35 days to reflect the interim disqualification resulting in a disqualification of 13 years and 237 days.

If that calculation is wrong then the matter can be brought back before me under the slip ruled and rectified.

There will be an order for an extended retest Before you can drive again and your licence will be endorsed.

You will pay the statutory surcharge in respect of which there will be a collection order.

Judge Alan Conrad KC

27<sup>th</sup> May 2025