

R v Aimee BETRO

SENTENCING REMARKS

Introduction:

1. You were tried and convicted by the jury of three offences: Conspiracy to murder, Possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, and Fraudulent evasion of a prohibition on the importation of ammunition. On Count 1, you were convicted of conspiring together with Mohammed Aslam and Mohamed Nazir. I tried those two defendants last year, when they were convicted of that offence. In addition, Mohammed Nazir was also convicted of Possession of a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, and Fraudulent evasion of a prohibition on the importation of ammunition; those were the same offences you were convicted of on Counts 2 and 3. I sentenced those two offenders on 7 November 2024. In preparing for this hearing I have reminded myself of the case against them, I have read the Transcript of my sentencing remarks, and I have reminded myself of the sentences I passed on them, all in order to ensure that there is fairness and consistency between the sentences that I passed on them and the sentence that I must pass on you.

Facts

2. On 21 July 2018 there was an incident of serious disorder at the Noreen Seher Boutique at 15 Alum Rock Road in Birmingham, which was the business address of Mohammed Aslat. That incident appears to have been caused by a dispute between Mr Aslat and his family, and Mohammed Aslam (who was from Derby) and his family. Following that incident Mr Aslat, Aslam and his son Nazir were all detained in hospital. Later that evening there was an attack on the

Aslam family home in Derby, where the windows were smashed. Each of these incidents generated a police investigation, but no one was ever prosecuted. Aslam in particular was seriously injured and it is clear that those two incidents caused considerable antagonism and resentment between the two families. Furthermore, I'm quite satisfied that was the motive and motivation for what took place in September of 2019. In particular, Aslam and Nazir planned a revenge attack on Mr Aslat and his family, and you were recruited to conduct what was intended to be an execution.

3. How and why you came to be recruited for this task remains unclear. What I am satisfied of is as follows. You and Nazir met on an online dating App. That led to the two of you forming a friendship which was conducted by text messages and video calls. Only a few of those text messages have survived. They were recovered from Nazir's phone following his arrest. They included messages about shipments you were arranging for him, and those shipments appear to have related to firearms or firearm parts. Whether that was in fact what you were shipping for him, or whether you were sourcing old video games for him as you claimed in evidence, I do not need to determine. What is clear is that you formed a close association and in December 2018 you travelled to this country for Christmas and New Year. You told the jury that one evening during the course of your stay Nazir came to your accommodation and the two of you slept together. You then returned to the US but came back to this country in May 2019. Despite telling Nazir that you were coming you did not meet up. Sometime after that you arranged to come to this country in August 2019, your third visit to the UK in nine months. It is not possible for me to know whether Nazir had recruited you to his revenge scheme by the time you landed in Manchester on 22nd August, but if you had not been recruited by then it is clear that you were recruited at some point over the next two weeks. Why you agreed to join in his scheme is also not clear. However, it appears

that you were acting out of infatuation or love. Indeed, when you gave evidence you said that despite only meeting Nazir face to face on one brief occasion, by the time you arrived in the UK in August 2019 you were in love with him. As a result, you agreed to become the principal agent for his scheme to kill Mohammed Aslat or a member of his family.

4. On the evidence, I strongly suspect that you had already been recruited by the time you landed in the UK. That is because four days later, on 26 August, for no good reason you hired an expensive Mercedes motor car, the only time during your entire trip that you hired a car and travelled to Derby to meet up with Nazir. You then let him drive the car and almost immediately he was involved in a collision with two other cars, one driven by his father and the other by an acquaintance of his. Although you claim this was an accident you knew nothing about, it is perfectly clear that this was no accident and was some form of insurance fraud. There is no suggestion that this conduct was directly connected to the offences for which you were convicted, but it is clear to me that by that time you were quite willing to engage in and facilitate dishonest criminal conduct with Nazir, and it strongly suggests that you had other future criminal conduct in mind.
5. You returned to Derby twice more during your trip, once on 3rd September and again on 6th September. I am quite satisfied that you had been recruited to Nazir's scheme by 6th September. By that day he had obtained access to a firearm to carry out his plan, and a video of it being fired, just outside Derby, was sent to his phone. Whether you were present at the demonstration or it was recorded so that it could be shown to you, matters not. By that time, you had agreed to carry out the shooting.
6. You returned to Birmingham and began to prepare to carry out the plan. The following day you purchased an unregistered PAYG phone and met up with Nazir, who had come to Birmingham with his father.

You kept that phone for your own use in this scheme. Later that day you contacted Mohammed Aslat, using that phone, and pretended to be interested in purchasing a car he had advertised for sale on Gumtree. Your initial plan was to arrange to meet up with Mr Aslat and shoot him; however, he was immediately suspicious because he had not included his phone number in the advert and he declined to meet up saying you should make contact the following day. That evening Nazir came to visit you in your hotel and the two of you remained in your room for over 2 hours, before he then returned to Derby. It seems likely that during that meeting you began to develop a second plan because the following day you purchased another unregistered PAYG phone and you met up with Nazir, who had once again come to Birmingham with his father, and you gave that phone to him. Thereafter, that was how the two of you believed you were communicating secretly. In furtherance of the new plan, you bought a Mercedes car. You then called Mr Aslat again about the car he had for sale, but once more he put you off. As a result, the new plan came into action.

7. You drove to the South Yardley area, near where Mr Aslat lived in Measham Grove, and you met up with Nazir and his father, who were in a Volvo motor car. They led you to Measham Grove and you parked up outside Mr Aslat's family home. You came and went from that address several times but eventually you parked up and waited. By that time, you were armed with the pistol supplied to you by Nazir, and you had put on clothing designed to hide your identity. Shortly after 8pm Sakinder Ali, Mr Aslat's son, returned home in his car. It seems likely that you were tipped off about his arrival by Nazir. As soon as he got out of his car you approached him on foot and when you were about 6-7 yards away you tried to shoot him. Fortunately for him, the gun jammed, and he was able to get back into his car and reverse out of Measham Grove. As he did so he struck your open car door damaging it so that it would no longer close. You got back

into your car and tried to follow him, but due to the damage to the door you were forced to abandon the pursuit and the car. Had the gun not jammed I have no doubt you would have shot and killed Sakinder Ali.

8. You then called Nazir, who was still in the area, but you decided not to meet up. Instead, you called a taxi and returned to your hotel. You then sent Mr Aslat a series of text messages, no doubt dictated by Nazir (if not written by him) taunting him and challenging him to come to a meeting at Asda in Small Heath. He refused to come and that led you to hatch a further scheme. You left your hotel and went to Small Heath where you called a taxi to take you back to Measham Grove. You arrived shortly after 1am, got the taxi to wait, and then walked down Measham Grove. You walked over to Mr Aslat's home and fired three shots through the upstairs windows. Fortunately, no one was injured, although you were not to know that. You then left and returned to your hotel. Further messages were sent to Mr Aslat which were clearly intended as a warning and to frighten him.
9. The following morning you left Birmingham and headed to Manchester to catch your flight home. Nazir was due to travel to the US four days later; however, while you were at the airport you desperately tried to change his flights so that he could come with you, no doubt because your plot to kill Mr Aslat had failed and he wanted to leave the country as soon as possible, but you were unable to do so. What it did show was your state of panic and how close the two of you were.
10. Nazir followed you to the US, where you told the jury you went on a trip together to the West Coast and then the East Coast and Canada, before he then returned to the UK on 13th October. Three days later you sent three parcels that you had packed, to Faris Quayum in the UK. This was yet another of Nazir's schemes which you were prepared to join in. They contained ammunition and firearm parts. Shortly after you sent them the UK police received a series of

anonymous phone calls tipping them of about the delivery of firearms and ammunition to Mr Quayum. Mr Quayum was a former associate of Nazir. The two appear to have fallen out and Nazir was trying to frame him as an importer of firearms and ammunition. As a result, he was arrested and interviewed under caution before being released.

Sentencing Council Guidelines

11. There are no Sentencing Council guidelines for the offence of Conspiracy to murder. However, the approach that courts are invited to take in relation to sentence is this; if there are no specific guidelines relating to a particular offence, the court is entitled to look at sentencing guidelines for similar offences and use those as a basis for determining the appropriate sentence in any particular case. The advantage of doing that, and taking that approach, is to promote consistency. I took the view that the Sentencing Council guidelines that relate to the offence of Attempted Murder were of considerable assistance to me in sentencing Aslam and Nazir, and I take the view that they are equally applicable to you. I make it clear that is because of the particular facts of this case and your involvement in the Conspiracy that enables me to make a clear and direct comparison between your offending and offending covered by the Attempted Murder guidelines. A person is guilty of Attempted Murder if they do an act which is more than merely preparatory to the Commission of the offence of murder, or they encourage or assist another to do so, and when they do so they intend that the victim should be killed. A Conspiracy to murder is an agreement that one of the conspirators will murder the identified victim or victims , thus it is the agreement rather than the attempt that is the criminality. However, in this particular case although you were charged with Conspiracy to murder and not Attempted Murder in fact you went far beyond simply reaching an agreement to kill and, in reality, you did in fact attempt

to kill Sakinder Ali. It was only a matter of chance that the firearm did not discharge and that Mr Ali was not killed.

12. I do not intend to sentence you by slavishly following the terms of those guidelines, but I do intend to use the structure of those guidelines in my approach to sentence and I take the view that those guidelines are, on the facts of this particular case, extremely helpful. When approaching sentence there are two principal issues that a judge needs to consider: culpability and harm. So far as culpability is concerned, the Attempted Murder guidelines suggest this case falls into the Very High culpability bracket, category A. That is because the offence involved the use of a firearm. So far as harm is concerned there was no physical harm that was in fact caused, although Mr Ali must have been put in very considerable fear. This case must fall at the lower level of harm, category 3. The starting point for a category A3 Attempted Murder is 25 years imprisonment, with a range of 20 to 30 years. I am not tied to those guidelines, but they are extremely helpful in determining the appropriate starting point for any sentence in relation to the offence of Conspiracy to Murder. I must then consider the aggravating features and the mitigating features in this case. So far as you are concerned clearly you had a leading role. I accept that Nazir recruited you, but you were the gunwoman, that is you were the person who was prepared to fire the gun, as a result you showed that were willing to carry out the killing yourself. Furthermore, this was a Conspiracy to murder more than one person. So far as mitigation is concerned I take into account your antecedent history, your age, the fact that you will serve some or all of your sentence in a UK prison, far away from home, and the contents of your letter in which you provide details of your background and personal history and express remorse for your actions.

13. Were I to be sentencing you solely for the offence of Conspiracy to murder I have come to the conclusion that the appropriate sentence would have been no less than that which I would have

imposed on Nazir, that is 27 years imprisonment, if not a little more as you pulled the trigger.

14. Turning to count 2, there are Sentencing Council guidelines in relation to that offence. The offence is agreed to be culpability A, and harm category 2, with a starting point of six years imprisonment and a range of four to eight years. The offence is particularly aggravated by the fact that you fired the gun, and it was a prohibited weapon that you used. Were I to be sentencing you for that offence on its own it seems to me that a sentence in the order of six years imprisonment would have been appropriate, the same as I imposed on Nazir.
15. Finally, on count 3 there are Sentencing Council guidelines in relation to that offence as well. It is agreed that the culpability is High and the harm is category 3, with a starting point of two years imprisonment and a range of one to three years. On its own the appropriate sentence would have been two years imprisonment.
16. Before I turn to the appropriate sentence I have considered whether or not this offending is so serious that I ought to impose a sentence of life imprisonment on you. Sentences of life imprisonment in cases of this sort should only be imposed in exceptional cases; I do not think this is one of those cases. I must then consider whether you are a dangerous offender, that is somebody who is a significant risk of causing serious harm to members of the public occasioned by you committing further specified offences. Although there is no pre-sentence report I am entitled to look at your offending when I make that assessment. In particular I bear in mind the fact that you were engaged in a complex well planned Conspiracy to murder, that you were prepared to pull the trigger and did so on two separate occasions, and that you were prepared to play your part in the importation of ammunition into this country. I am quite satisfied that you represent such a risk. I then have to considered whether or not I should impose an extended sentence of imprisonment, that is

whether I need to add to the period of supervision on licence that you will be subject to once you are released. I bear in mind that the sentence that I intend to impose on you will result in you being the subject of imprisonment and supervision for much of the rest of your life, as a result I do not think it is either necessary or proportionate to impose such a sentence on you. Finally, in passing sentence I have taken into account the fact that you spent 198 days in custody in Armenia which is a period that will not automatically be deducted from the sentence that you must serve and I have adjusted the sentence accordingly.

Sentence:

17. The sentences that I intend to impose upon you are as follows. In relation to count 1, I intend to impose a sentence which represents the entirety of your offending. In doing so I have taken into account the Sentencing Council guidelines on Totality, and those on Imposition. The sentence that I impose is one of 30 years imprisonment. So far as Count 2 is concerned the sentence will be 6 years imprisonment, concurrent. On count 3 the sentence will be 2 years imprisonment, also concurrent. You will serve 2/3 of that sentence before you are released. You will then be released on licence, and you will be the subject of supervision for the remainder of your sentence. You will have conditions imposed on your licence. If you fail to comply with those conditions you may be returned to custody to serve some or all of the remaining part of your sentence. I make a Deprivation order in relation to (1) the Mobile phone seized from you [JM/100] (2) the Mobile phone recovered in Armenia [JM/104]; (3) the Macbook recovered in Armenia [JM/105]; and a Forfeiture Order in relation to the ammunition. There will be no order for costs or compensation. The Victim Surcharge provisions apply and I direct that an order is drawn up accordingly.

HHJ Simon Drew KC

Birmingham Crown Court

21st August 2025