

**Rex**

**-V-**

**SER**

**COH**

**&**

**ABDURRAHMAN SUMMERS**

**SENTENCING COMMENTS.**

1. SER, COH and Abdurrahman Summers, you have been convicted by a jury of the murder of Reuben Higgins. I must now sentence you for that offence.
2. S and C, you are now 16 years of age but at the time of the murder you were both just 15. Because of your age the only possible sentence, is one of detention during His Majesty's pleasure. Abdurrahman Summers, you are now 19 years of age. You were 18 at the time of the murder. In light of your age, the only possible sentence is one of custody for life. In each of your cases, I must set the minimum term that you must serve in custody before you can make any application to the parole board for release on licence.
3. At the time of his death Reuben was just 17 years of age. He was part of a large and loving family and on their behalf, I have considered victim personal statements from his mother, father, stepmother, grandmother and aunt. His mother speaks of Reuben's humour and intelligence. She says, "he had hopes and dreams. He wanted to be a dad one day, he wanted marriage and his own home and business." She speaks of her home now being filled with sadness and describes the impact upon each of Reuben's

3 siblings. She says, “his killing has left me heartbroken, lost and lonely. A piece of me is now missing; a piece of me that will never come back.” Reuben’s father describes him as an absolute joy to be with. He describes him as loving, caring, witty and someone who always filled a room with joy. He says, “when I was informed that my precious, beautiful boy, my friend had died-my world fell apart. My physical and mental health plummeted. I was then consumed by uncontrollable darkness. Sleepless nights, anxiety, anger, confusion and many more personal issues followed.” He has now been diagnosed with PTSD. His stepmother speaks of the gaping hole in their lives that Reuben’s death has caused. She speaks of her family’s heartbreak and says that in her case even the simplest of daily tasks became impossible such that she didn’t leave her house for many months and even now only does so occasionally. She takes medication for anxiety and has now been diagnosed with PTSD. Reuben’s grandparents speak of their feelings of confusion and describe the agony of his loss as been too much to bear. This is the future that you have consigned Reuben’s family to. How then did this tragic state of affairs come about?

4. On the evening of 29 October 2024 Reuben was in Marston Green together with 3 friends. By coincidence, the 3 defendants together with a fourth man named MAS, were also there. The 2 groups did not know one another and had no contact until about 6:15 PM. At that time, the defendants’ group approached Reuben’s group and spoke to them. At first, that was friendly but then MAS suggested that he recognised Reuben as someone who had previously pulled a knife on him. There is no evidence to suggest that this had actually happened and when MAS asked Reuben to go around the corner with him, Reuben refused. He was unarmed; he did not want trouble, and he was backing away in an effort to avoid confrontation.

5. MAS then reached for a distinctive knife in his waistband. As he did that, the 3 defendants were moving forwards, and two witnesses gave evidence that they reached for their waistbands. Reuben and his friends all fled but went in different directions. Reuben ran a short distance up the main road and sought refuge in a shop called the Vape Minimarket. He was pursued there by MAS and the 3 defendants. Reuben sought to keep the door of the shop closed by lying down in front of it whereupon the chasing group attacked the door in an effort to force it open.
6. The jury heard from a witness who was working in the shop, named Farhan Taha. He told them that he saw 3 or 4 people punching, kicking and pushing at the door. He described this group as shouting, swearing and being very aggressive. He told the jury that they all pushed together and forced open the door and then all of those outside came into the shop. This stage of events was captured by CCTV. It is of relatively poor quality but it does reveal that those attacking the door suddenly move forward and no one can be seen to remain outside. Significantly, the palm or fingerprint of each of the defendants was later recovered on the outside of the shop door. This evidence leads me to the conclusion that all of the defendants were involved in forcing open the door and all of them then entered the shop.
7. The door opened inwards pushing Reuben into a corner which was partly covered by the shop's CCTV. Mr Taha told the jury that Reuben was picked up off the floor and then attacked. He described seeing people making stabbing motions towards him but didn't actually see any knives. This attack lasted no more than 10 seconds but in that time Reuben was stabbed 4 times by at least 2 knives. Mr Taha believes that all of those that entered his shop were involved in stabbing Reuben but COH and Abdurrahman

Summers were not captured by the CCTV in circumstances where they probably would have been if they had actively been stabbing Reuben. I therefore conclude that although they entered the shop and intentionally encouraged the attack, they may not have directly stabbed Reuben themselves.

8. Mr Taha described SER as being the most aggressive of the attackers and that is borne out by the CCTV which clearly shows him assaulting Reuben with MAS stood behind him. Having been stabbed, Reuben fell to the floor where he was kicked to the body. The attacking group then fled and the external CCTV captured COH leaving the shop at the end of the attack. Significantly, a different figure was filmed leaving the shop shortly after the attack had begun. By process of elimination, that individual was Abdurrahman Summers.
9. The attacking group then fled but SER returned within minutes because he realised that he had dropped his phone. He re-entered the shop and asked Mr Taha where his phone was. As he did that, Reuben was lying on the ground, obviously seriously injured. SER completely ignored him and when Mr Taha told him that he didn't know where his phone was, he simply left the shop.
10. One of the stabbing injuries inflicted upon Reuben went into his chest to a depth of 6 cm. That wound penetrated his heart causing rapid blood loss and eventually cardiac arrest. Members of the public and then paramedics sought to assist but to no avail and Reuben was declared dead just after 7 PM. A flick knife subsequently found hidden in MAS's home, bore traces of Reuben's DNA and matched the description of the knife seen in MAS's

waistband. Its dimensions are consistent with the knife that caused the wound to Reuben's heart and I conclude that it is highly likely that this was the knife that caused his death. Two of the other stabbing injuries, both to the left leg, were 15 cm and 6 cm deep respectively. The final stabbing injury was to the left arm to a depth of 5 cm. Those injuries were caused by a single bladed weapon as opposed to the double-bladed flick knife used by MAS.

11. The defendants were arrested over the next eight days. Prior to his arrest, Abdurrahman Summers travelled to London and unsuccessfully tried to buy a flight to Spain. He then bought a bus ticket to Madrid. He didn't ultimately travel and instead returned to Birmingham.

12. MAS fled to Pakistan and has still not been apprehended.

13. Drawing these strands together, this was a group attack in which all of the defendants assisted MAS by pursuing Reuben Higgins, forcing open the door and entering the vape shop. The most prominent attacker inside the shop was SER and I have no doubt that he was armed with a single edged knife and used it to stab Reuben. COH and Abdurrahman Summers were seen to move their hands towards their waistbands, and I conclude that they were also armed with knives. As I have observed, they cannot be seen on the vape shop CCTV and I cannot be sure that they actually used their knives upon Reuben.

14. SER repeatedly stabbed Reuben and did so in circumstances where Reuben was being actively attacked by MAS who he knew was also armed. I

conclude that in those moments he intended to kill his victim. COH and Abdurrahman Summers intentionally encouraged an attack involving knives and they were armed themselves. They did not however use their weapons upon Reuben and in light of the speed of the attack, I cannot be sure that they intended Reuben should be killed as opposed to being caused really serious injury.

15. I must assess the appropriate minimum term to attach to your sentences by reference to schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020.

16. Abdurrahman Summers, you were 18 years of age. You took a weapon to the scene of the attack, and you encouraged others to do the same. Your case therefore falls within paragraph 4 of schedule 21 and the appropriate starting point in your case is a minimum term of 25 years.

17. S and C you were 15 at the time of the offence. You both took knives to the scene of the attack, and you encouraged others to do the same. Your cases therefore fall within paragraphs 4 and 5A of the schedule and the appropriate starting point is a minimum term of 17 years.

18. I must next consider whether there are things which make what you did either more or less serious.

19. There are two things that apply to each of you and make what you did more serious. First, Reuben was not particularly vulnerable in the sense referred to at paragraph 9 of schedule 21 but he was alone, he had no means of defending himself, and he was a 17-year-old child. It follows that he was

vulnerable by reason of his age and circumstances and a guideline known as the overreaching guideline identifies vulnerability as an aggravating feature. Second, the attack was carried out in a public place.

20. In each of your separate cases, there are then additional matters which make what you did more serious.

21. S, in your case there are four such matters. First, although you didn't deliver the fatal blow, you played a leading role in what was a group attack. Second, when you returned to the vape shop you stole Reuben's phone. That phone has never been recovered. Third, at the time of the murder you were on police bail. Fourth, in December 2024 you were sentenced for an offence of theft. That offence involved you stealing a phone from a schoolboy in circumstances where one of your group was in possession of a knife. This was an offence which came close to amounting to robbery and the victim was a child.

22. C, in your case there are three additional matters which make what you did more serious. First, in 2023, when aged 13 or 14, you committed 10 offences of robbery or attempted robbery. You committed most of those offences together with others and several of them involved either the production or mention of a knife. On at least one occasion you were in possession of a knife yourself. Second, at the time of the murder, you were on bail. Third, you were subject to 2 conditional discharges and a referral order.

23. Abdurrahman Summers, I identify two aggravating features in your case.

First, you committed 6 offences of robbery and an offence of possessing a knife, between 2020 and 2022. Most of those offences were committed as part of a group. Several of them involved a knife being mentioned or shown to the victim and on one occasion you were in possession of a knife yourself. I remind myself that you were only aged between 14 and 16 when you committed those crimes, but they nonetheless show a pattern of using weapons to threaten violence and they make your position more serious. Second, you were convicted of the last of these robberies in April 2023 and sentenced to 3 years in a young offenders institution. You were on licence following your release from that sentence, at the time you participated in Reuben's murder. Your attempt to buy a flight to Spain is an additional aggravating feature but ultimately, you thought better of leaving the jurisdiction, and I conclude that this doesn't make your position significantly worse.

24. I must now consider things which make what you did less serious.

25. In all of your cases, the point is made that what you did was not premeditated in the sense that you didn't go out planning to attack Reuben. Whilst I bear that in mind, you all went out armed with knives and prepared for trouble. That substantially reduces the importance of your lack of advanced planning of a particular offence. Your barristers tell me that you are all remorseful. I see little real evidence of that, but I accept that you are all young and that you may in time come to appreciate the enormity of what you did.



26.S and C, you are both children and I must therefore bear in mind the Sentencing Council's definitive guideline on sentencing children and young people. This guideline requires me to focus upon your age and maturity and to have regard to your welfare. In doing so, I must bear in mind a variety of factors including that the impact of punishment is likely to be felt more heavily by a child or young person in comparison to an adult and that sentences are likely to feel longer due to their young age. I must also think about your background and bear in mind that young offenders may be more willing to change their behaviour than older offenders. Bearing this guidance in mind, I must now think about you individually.

27.S, there are several things which lead me to reduce what would otherwise be the sentence in your case. You committed this offence when you were aged 15 years and 4 months. Even now, you have only just turned 16. The starting point in your case of 17 years applies to offenders aged 15 or 16 and it follows that at the relevant time you were towards the lower end of this bracket. The guideline relating to sentencing children reminds me that your emotional and developmental age is more important than your actual age. In this respect, several things are significant. You had a disrupted and difficult childhood which led to the involvement of child services and eventually lead to you being placed in a residential children's home. You also have ADHD and autistic spectrum disorder. The youth offending team inform me that your medical records show that you have had difficulties with attention, concentration and behaviour from a young age and that these difficulties are likely to have been made worse by your autism and ADHD. Drawing these threads together, your background together with your neuro diversity is likely to have led to emotional immaturity, and I accept that you were less mature than the average 15-year-old. That conclusion is an

important consideration for me when deciding upon the right sentence in your case.

28. Another guideline specifically requires me to think about whether your neuro diversity affects your responsibility for what you did. In this respect, ADHD commonly leads to impulsivity, and I accept that this may apply to you. You, however, went out armed with a knife and it's no coincidence that you were with a group who were armed in a similar way. In short, you went out ready and willing to engage in violent crime and your attack upon Reuben and had little to do with impulsivity.

29. Your probation report informs me that you were being exploited by adults, and you were the victim of modern slavery, including at the time of the murder. This, however, is not what caused you to become involved in the attack upon Reuben. Although you were with older youths, there is nothing to suggest that they were the individuals exploiting you and your defence statement makes it clear that they were not.

30. Unfortunately, you are in poor health and suffer from a condition known as Marfan syndrome which weakens the major artery taking blood to your heart. This is a life-threatening condition that requires you to attend regular hospital appointments. You will receive appropriate treatment whilst in custody, but I bear in mind that this combined with your other difficulties, means that you are vulnerable and may find a custodial sentence more difficult than would otherwise be the case. Finally, I bear in mind that you are presently making good progress in custody.

31.C, there are several things which lead me to reduce what would otherwise be the sentence in your case. You played what lawyers refer to as a subordinate role meaning that you were less involved in the attack than others. In addition, although you were armed with a knife and encouraged others to use knives, you did not intend that Reuben should be killed and instead, your intention was limited to him being caused really serious injury.

32.Many of the things that apply in SER's case also apply to you. At the relevant time you were aged 15 years and 3 months. You had a difficult and chaotic childhood which included disrupted schooling. A psychiatric report written by Dr Nina Champaneri, gives me more detail about your background and difficulties. I'm not going to refer to these things in public but I bear them in mind. You also have ADHD together with speech and language difficulties. The youth offending team inform me that you have a fear of failure, low self-worth and that you are developmentally immature. I accept that this is the position and it follows that you are immature compared to most 15-year-olds. The youth offending team say that your ADHD makes you more impulsive and may affect your ability to make reasonable choices. Whilst I accept this, you went out armed with a knife and prepared to engage in violent crime. Your convictions for robbery demonstrate that you had behaved in a similar way on previous occasions and I conclude that impulsivity had little to do with you becoming involved in the attack upon Reuben.

33.In common with S, you were the victim of modern slavery at the relevant time. This, however, did not cause you to become involved in the attack and

I see nothing to suggest that the men you were with, were those who were exploiting you.

34.Finally, I bear in mind that you appear to be making progress in custody which may provide hope for the future.

35.Abdurrahman Summers. The following things lead me to reduce the sentence that would otherwise have been appropriate in your case. First, you left the shop before the attack had concluded. You did nothing to reverse the encouragement and assistance you had already provided but I accept that you were or at least may have been, less involved than any of the other attackers. Second, your intention was limited to causing Reuben really serious injury. Third, at the relevant time you were just 2 months passed your eighteenth birthday. Your probation report suggests that you lack maturity, and I accept that assessment. It follows that although you were significantly older than either S or C, you were still young, and you were immature for your age. The starting point in your case of 25 years, applies to a mature adult and your youth and immaturity therefore require downwards adjustment from that starting point. In this context, if you had been just 3 months younger, the relevant starting point would have been 23 years.

36.In your case, I have read a series of personal references in which friends and family members express their opinion of your character. Whilst I accept that their opinions are sincerely held, they are wholly at odds with your character as revealed by your previous convictions and the present offence. In these circumstances, I cannot attach any significant weight to them.

37. I bear in mind that the different starting points provided by schedule 21 are not inflexible and must be applied as between accomplices so as to produce a just result. I am assisted in achieving this by guidance provided by the Court of Appeal in the recent cases of R v Kamarra-Jarra and R v Nah'shun Thomas. Finally, the probation service informs me that in some respects you are doing well in custody and have already achieved several qualifications. This may suggest that you are capable of making positive changes and I bear that in mind.

38. At its heart, doing justice in your case requires me to balance that on the one hand, you are significantly older and more mature than your accomplices and therefore possessed a greater understanding of the consequences of your actions, whilst on the other hand, you ultimately played a lesser role in the attack upon Reuben.

39. In deciding your sentences, I have listened to everything which has been said by both the prosecution and your lawyers. Bearing all those matters in mind, the sentences I impose are as follows.

40. S, you will be detained during His Majesty's pleasure. The minimum term in your case, before you can make any application to the parole board is one of 17 years. You have spent 315 days on remand, and this must be deducted from the minimum term I have imposed. Accordingly, you will have to serve a minimum of 16 years and 50 days.

41. C, you will be detained during His Majesty's pleasure. The minimum term in your case, before you can make any application to the parole board is one of 15 years. You have spent 312 days on remand, and this must be deducted

from the minimum term I have imposed. Accordingly, you will have to serve a minimum of 14 years and 53 days. In your case I take no action in respect of your breach of 2 sentences of conditional discharge.

42. Abdurrahman Summers, I sentence you to custody for life. The minimum term in your case, before you can make any application to the parole board is one of 19 years. You have spent 310 days on remand, and this must be deducted from the minimum term I have imposed. Accordingly, you will have to serve a minimum of 18 years and 55 days.

43. It is important that you and everyone concerned with this case should understand what your sentences means. The minimum term is not a fixed term after which you will be automatically released but instead is the minimum time that you will spend in custody before your case can be considered by the parole board. It will be for the parole board to say at that time, whether or not you will be released. If you are released, you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence was to be revoked, you would be recalled into custody to continue serving your sentence.

44. In the case of Abdurahaman Summers, the surcharge will be applied as appropriate. Pursuant to s42 and s380 of the Sentencing act, and in light of the circumstances of this case, I do not make such an order against the parents of either S or C.

45. I make deprivation orders in relation to the exhibits listed at paragraph 26 in the prosecution note for sentence.

Paul Farrer KC.

15 September 2025.