

R-v- Awad Abdel Samad and Mahmood El Hazzaa.

Sentencing Remarks

1. Awad Abdel Samad you were born on the 18/11/00 and you are now aged nearly 25. Mahmood El Hazzaa you were born on the 27/6/98 and you are now 27 years old.
2. Mr Abdel Samad you were convicted on the 24th of September 2025 of the murder of Mohammed Abdi. The offence occurred on the 4th of June 2024 when you were aged 23. You have also pleaded guilty to two offences of possession of a bladed article which occurred on the 4th of June 2024 and on the day of your arrest, the 8th of October 2024.
3. Mr El Hazzaa, you were convicted by the jury of attempting to pervert the course of public justice on 4 June 2024 when you were aged 25.
4. I have to sentence you both for those offences. I have read the sentencing notes and other documents uploaded to section T of the digital case system.
5. There appears to be a background to these offences. On 2 June 2024 a man called Soufian Chaffi, known to both of you, was kidnapped and tortured. Footage was posted on social media showing him naked and being humiliated. He was eventually released and went to hospital with injuries including a broken nose. There is evidence that Mohammed Abdi, the victim in this case, had been involved in that attack. In any event, I am satisfied that the two of you believed that he was and that a black Porsche Cayenne car was also connected to it. In addition, you Mr Abdel Samad believed that an associate of Mr Abdi, Jonathan Akapelwa,

had been wrongly acquitted of the murder of a friend of yours Mr Saleh.

The Facts

6. What happened at about 10:40 PM on 4 June 2024 was caught on CCTV and the footage was the central evidence in your trial. The two of you were in a white Seat Leon travelling southbound down the A5 Edgware Road with a man called Hassan Ismail and a fourth man who remains unidentified. Mr Ismail has never been arrested as he left the country after the incident with which this court is concerned.
7. You, Mr El Hazzaa, were driving and you pulled over to the side of the road near to its junction with Bell Street. The street was busy with cars backing up at traffic lights and many pedestrians on the pavements. The black Porsche Cayenne that you connected with the attack on Mr Chaffi drew up behind you and flashed its lights. In the trial you, Mr Abdel Samad, said that you thought this was an attack. That is not apparent from the footage. No one got out of the Porsche initially and a confrontation ensued only when you emerged from the Seat armed with a knife and ran to the front passenger window of the Porsche and began banging on it with the knife. You were followed by Mr Ismail. It was submitted on your behalf that the Crown had characterised this as a random meeting rather than a revenge attack but in my view the latter was always the Crown's case and, looking back at the notes of my summing up, that is how I described their case to the jury. In respect of this

matter, I am satisfied to the criminal standard that you Mr Abdel Samad were the initial aggressor in this incident and that this was a revenge attack.

8. As you banged on the window the driver of the car, Mr Mohammed Abdi, got out armed with a knife. You went round the front of the car to where he was and in the meantime one of his passengers, Jonathan Akapelwa, got out and aimed a gun at you although he did not fire. There was a confrontation between you and Mr Abdi during which he slashed your arm causing a nasty wound. You kicked out and his knife fell to the floor leaving him unarmed. He retreated to the Porsche and you followed. He got into the driver's seat and you leaned in and stabbed him three times. Two of the wounds he suffered were not life-threatening but the third was fatal. The knife went through skin, adipose tissue and muscle into the right pleural cavity. It went through the cartilage of two ribs and continued into the heart causing a wound in the upper right ventricle measuring at least 2.8 cm. The estimated depth of penetration of this wound was 7.5 cm. While this was going on you Mr El Hazzaa were waiting in the Seat and you moved it a little way forward out of the area of the main confrontation.
9. You, Mr Abdel Samad, withdrew from the driver's side of the Porsche and confronted other passengers from it, namely Mr Akapelwa and a man called Mohammed Miah. As you walked round the Porsche you paused to pick up the knife that had been dropped. As you made your way around the front of the car Mr Abdi started to drive off and collided with you. You stumbled and dropped a knife. The gun held by Mr Akapelwa was accidentally discharged by him and people on the street dispersed in panic.

10. Mr Abdi drove a little way into Bell Street. You chased after the car and attempted to stab a rear tyre but the car moved away and you walked back to where Mr El Hazzaa was waiting for you. He drove you away, going through a red light to do so.
11. Mr Abdi's car came to a halt a little way up Bell Street having drifted into a parked car. Members of the public tried to help Mr Abdi who, by this time, had collapsed. Police and medics attended the scene but Dr Biedrycki, the pathologist, said that the wound to his heart was really unsurvivable and Mr Abdi died at the scene. He was just 19 years old.
12. Dr Biedrycki said that the force used to inflict the fatal wound was at least moderate but could have been greater. You accepted that the knife shown at page 34 of the trial graphics bundle, Exhibit RMC/1, was the knife you took to the scene and used. The blade of that knife is approximately 7.5 cm in length. I am satisfied that the critical wound effectively involved the whole of the blade of your knife entering Mr Abdi's body.
13. After the stabbing Mr El Hazzaa drove you away from the scene to an address where you were able to change your clothes. You were then driven by a female to Luton hospital so that you could get treatment for the wound you had suffered at Mr Abdi's hands. You gave false details to hospital staff and a police officer. You gave a false account as to how you had been injured, saying that you had been mugged outside Luton train station. You had also discarded your mobile phone and while at Luton you bought a new one.
14. Meanwhile you Mr El Hazzaa left the country at 6:20 AM that day on a flight booked after the killing of Mr Abdi. You flew from Stansted to Hamburg and remained out of the country until the

12/11/24 when, having been deported from Copenhagen, you flew into Heathrow. You were then arrested at the airport. In interview you made no comment.

15. You, Mr Abdel Samad, were arrested on 8 October 2024 and, as I have indicated, a knife was found on you that is exhibit LPG/1. That was a black locking knife. You pleaded guilty to possession of a bladed article in relation to this. You were interviewed by police about the events of 4/6/24 but remained silent.
16. Moving then to antecedents. Mr Abdel Samad you have four convictions for seven offences. So far as relevant you have a conviction on 21 September 2024 possession of a bladed article in respect of which you were imprisoned for five months. On 25 October 2023 you were made the subject of a community order for an offence of affray.
17. Mohammed El Hazzaa you have nine convictions for 10 offences. Those offences are variously dishonesty offences, burglary and criminal damage.

Victim Personal Statements

18. I have received statements from Mohammed Abdi's mother, Mrs Sharon Abdi and from Amira Abdi. They wanted the court to know that Mr Abdi was a kind-hearted and funny individual. He had a close relationship with his siblings and was a cherished son, a beloved brother and a young man with much to live for. He was full of life, love and dreams for the future. They feel that his life was stolen.
19. Mrs Abdi described the shock on learning that her beloved son had died. She says I still can't believe I will never see my son again. She felt so much pain and anger that she could not see him

or be there for him in his last moments or say goodbye to him or tell him how much he was loved. Since her son's death she has been depressed and has been unable to sleep properly. She feels stress all the time and misses her son so much it hurts. She says that her grief stays with her every day. She constantly thinks about her son and how much pain he must have been in when he was stabbed. The effect of losing her son on her health has been significant and she has been unable to go back to work. Her husband also had to stop working because his mental health deteriorated after their son's death. On a personal level she does not feel safe going outside any longer and lives in constant fear for the safety of her other five children.

20. On losing Mr Abdi Amira Abdi says that as a family they are broken. Their home is quieter, their gatherings emptier and their future feels incomplete because Mr Abdi is missing. She says that his absence is a wound that will never heal and that the stress and trauma has affected their health their work in their daily lives. She describes the grief as overwhelming. She wants the court to understand that he was a young man with much to live for and his life mattered.

21. The grief that the family has undergone and continues to suffer cannot be underestimated. It is clear that it is not just the fact of losing Mr Abdi that affects them but also the manner of his death. I shall sentence you, Mr Abdul Samad, according to the legal rules I must apply but no sentence upon you can in any way assuage the grief of Mr Abdi's relatives. They must find a way of living with this going forward. I note that Mrs Abdi wanted to attend the trial but found it too upsetting, which I perfectly understand, and I offer her and her family the courts condolences.

Mitigation

22. In mitigation on behalf of Mr Abdul Samad I have read the long and careful letter written by your brother. He speaks of you as a caring individual who has supported him and your sister. He speaks of the devastation this case has brought upon your family while recognising the pain and grief of Mr Abdi's family dealing with their tragic loss. He tells me that there was an encounter between your father and Mr Abdi's father after the trial and that, putting the tenets of their faith into practical effect, they were able to embrace each other. That is a powerful example to others.
23. In addition, Ms McAtasney has provided a sentencing note and has elaborated on her submissions in court today. The starting point under schedule 21 is not disputed. She submits that this was not a revenge attack, there is no evidence of gang involvement, that you were responding to a threat from Mr Abdi's group and that this was not planned. She invites me to say that this is not a case where I can be sure that you had an intention to kill. She asks me to take into account your age at the time of the offence and has referred me to the case of **ZA [2023] EWCA Crim 596** with which I am familiar. I also have a letter from you which expresses remorse for taking Mr Abdi's life which you say happened when you were trying to save your own life.
24. I have read the PSR prepared on you Mr El Hazzaa dated 9/11/25. I note that you maintained to the probation officer that you were unaware of any animosity between Mr Abdel Samad and the victim. Having heard the trial and the evidence of Mr Abdel Samad, in particular about the incident concerning Mr Chaffi, I am satisfied

that this was something that you must have been aware of and, I find as a fact, that you were aware of hostility between them. You said that you fled the country because you feared you were in danger and you have been stabbed in the back before in Lebanon.

25. The probation officer said that you did express some empathy to the victim's family. She says that this offence seems to be the product of reckless risk-taking behaviour, poor decision-making, lack of consequential thinking and underlying pro-criminal attitudes. You were subject to a community order when the offence occurred although you failed to tell probation when you moved home, as you were required to, and you were in breach of that order in any event. You moved out of your parents' home to live with your wife and small child although it appears that it is your father who supports them financially.
26. I am told that you have dyslexia and have never had a job. Your father now has a restaurant and Mr Aleeson says that you will have a job there when released.
27. You are assessed as posing a medium risk of re-conviction. Although the actuarial tool used by probation indicates a low risk of serious offending this would be increased by involvement with offending associates and by gambling which has been problematic for you in the past.
28. In mitigation Mr Aleeson submits that under the applicable sentencing guidelines this is not a high culpability case as contended for by the prosecution. He submits that the evidence indicates that it would have been impossible for you to appreciate what was happening on the street behind your car and that it is relevant too culpability when considering whether you must have known that the underlying offence to which your actions related

was a serious one. He also submits that your actions were unsophisticated and short-lived and involved driving Mr Abdel Samad away for a period of about 10 minutes.

Dealing with Mr El Hazzaa's sentence first.

Mohammed El Hazzaa

29. Mohammed El Hazzaa, I have determined that your offence falls squarely within culpability A in the relevant guidelines as the underlying offence was very serious. This may have been unplanned but, acting in effect as the getaway driver, was not limited in scope it was central to events that night and does not lead me to downgrade the categorisation. I am of the view that the way the guideline reads the culpability A factor relating to the underlying offence does not require knowledge of the seriousness of the underlying offence. Rather, any lack of knowledge would be a mitigating factor and go to the question of whether you had a lesser role in what occurred which could affect culpability. I have considered what your level of knowledge was and I am satisfied that you were aware of the acrimony between Mr Abdel Samad and Mr Abdi's group whether or not you were a party to it and that you must have been aware that the Porsche Cayenne was identified with Mr Abdi's group. Further two men got out of the Seat to confront the occupants of that car and one of those, Mr Abdel Samad came from the front passenger seat (as he appeared to get back into that seat afterwards) with a knife in his hand. I am satisfied that that you knew that serious violence was about to

ensue and that you knew that this had in fact occurred when a bloodied Mr Abdel Samad in company with Mr Ismail returned to the car. In those circumstances culpability is not reduced. The fact that the driving away from the scene lasted only a short time does not in my view reduce your blameworthiness as your actions were central to Mr Abdel Samed avoiding arrest at that time.

30. Ultimately, because of the availability of CCTV footage and other police investigations the impact on justice was not as great as it might have been. Therefore, this is a case of category 2 harm which means there is a starting point of two years imprisonment and a range of 1 to 4 years for this offence. The offence is aggravated because you were in breach of a community order and you fled the country.
31. Against that I am told you are genuinely remorseful and now that you have a small daughter your focus is on being a support to her and your wife.
32. Having considered all the factors relevant to sentence upon you I have determined that the sentence should be one of three years imprisonment. You will serve 40% of that sentence then be released on licence. Provided that you comply with the terms of your licence and commit no further offences you will not have to serve the rest of the sentence. If, however, you break your licence conditions or commit further offences while on licence you can be recalled to serve all or part of the balance of the sentence.
33. As this offence qualifies for a driving disqualification under both sections 163 and 164 of the Sentencing Act 2020 I shall impose a driving disqualification. The disqualification will be for a

period of 2 years with an extension period of 50% of the time you will spend in custody as provided for by s166 SA 2020. So, the total period will be 2 years with an extension period of 18 months making an overall disqualification of 3 years and 6 months

Awad Abdel Samad I then move on to you.

Schedule 21 Sentencing Act 2020

34. In respect of the offence of murder there is a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. My only role is to say how long it will be before you are allowed to apply for parole applying the rules set out in schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. If you were ever to be granted parole, you would remain on licence for the whole of your life and liable to recall to prison.
35. There is no dispute that this is a case which falls within paragraph 4 of that schedule as I am satisfied that a knife was taken to the scene by you intending to have it available as a weapon and that you used that knife in committing the murder. The starting point for the minimum term is therefore 25 years.
36. In my view there are a number of aggravating features. I am satisfied that this was a revenge attack and that you acted as part of a group.
37. The attack took place on a congested London street where there were many people in cars and on foot. This is a very busy area near to a major junction and a tube station. Having now viewed the CCTV footage a number of times and again this

morning one can see how terrifying this violence was to members of the public.

38. Further, the offence is aggravated to some extent by the fact that you have two previous convictions. One for an affray committed in the same area as this offence and one previous conviction for possession of a knife. You were also in possession of a knife on the day you were arrested and have pleaded guilty to that offence. Possession of a knife on the day of the murder is already accounted for under Schedule 21 and is not therefore an aggravating feature.

39. I come then to the question of intent. Although the fatal wound was deep the pathologist could not say that more than moderate force was used to inflict it. Looking at the CCTV footage one cannot see precisely what happened in the Porsche in the few seconds when you were attacking Mr Abdi. In the circumstances I cannot be sure of an intent to kill rather than to cause grievous bodily harm to the criminal standard. However, in the context of this case the mitigation provided by that is limited. You acted with extreme aggression and persistence when stabbing Mr Abdi. This was not a case of excessive self-defence.

40. You are a young man and you were aged 23 at the time of the murder. Your age and consequent lack of maturity provide some mitigation. In addition, I accept that you have expressed remorse as set out in your letter.

41. The sentence upon you for the offence of murder will be a life sentence and, balancing the aggravating and mitigating factors I have determined that the minimum term should be 27 years less 399 days on remand making by my calculation a term of 25 years 331 days before you could make any parole application. In respect of the offence of possession of a bladed article on 4/6/24 I impose a concurrent term of 12 months imprisonment and in respect of that on 8/10/24 a concurrent term of 6 months imprisonment.
42. If the information with which I have been provided as to the number of days on remand proves to be inaccurate, then the prosecution or defence must notify the court so that the case can be relisted to correct the calculation as soon as possible and, in any event, within 56 days.
43. I must impose the statutory charge in the appropriate amount in both cases.
44. I make orders for forfeiture and destruction of the knives seized during the investigation.

It has been brought to my attention that the reviewing lawyer in this case was greatly assisted by DC Pearce the disclosure officer who worked tirelessly to ensure that disclosure was properly effected. The role of the disclosure officer is vital to the administration of justice and the officer's contribution to this case should be noted by the police service in her favour.