

IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

THE KING

V

JALA BRENTI BENTI DEBELLA

**DISPOSAL: s5 Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964.**

1. Anita Mukhey was the heart of her family. She was a wife, mother and grandmother, aged 66 when she was stabbed to death, by a complete stranger, on a busy main road in N London.
2. Her husband, Hari, has provided a personal statement which I had read and which has been read in open court. It is a dignified and heartbreaking account of the devastation caused to the family by Anita's sudden and brutal death. That statement, and these remarks, should be available to any authority looking at this case in the future.
3. I am not passing a sentence today because the Defendant has not yet been convicted of any criminal offence in relation to his actions on that day.
4. On 12 January 2026, having heard evidence from 2 consultant psychiatrists (both approved under s12(2) Mental Health Act 1983) I ruled that the Defendant was unfit to be tried, pursuant to s4 Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964.
5. A jury was sworn on 19 January 2026 to try the issue pursuant to s4A of the 1964 Act. I appointed instructed KC and junior trial counsel pursuant to CPR 2025 r25.10(3)(a).
6. Yesterday, on 22 January 2026, the jury found that the Defendant did the acts specified in Counts 1 & 2, namely that on 9 May 2024 he carried a knife in public

and used it to stab and kill Anita Mukhey. For those reasons the purpose of today's hearing is to deal with the Defendant's case pursuant to s5 of the 1964 Act.

7. Mid-morning on 9 May 2024, Anita was utterly defenceless as she waited at a bus stop on Burnt Oak Broadway. Members of the public watched, horrified, as out of the blue, a man attacked her. His blows looked like punches but it became clear he was stabbing her. The sudden knife attack on her may have been swift but her terrified screams were heard by many people in the area. Mortally wounded to the neck, Anita fell into the road and collapsed, dying soon afterwards despite every effort to save her. The attacker walked off nonchalantly, despite being challenged.
8. The Defendant was quickly arrested. At interview he had legal representation and the support of an appropriate adult. He chose to say nothing of any use to the police.
9. On overwhelming evidence, the jury was sure that Anita's killer was the Defendant. He used a large knife which he had recently ordered on-line and which was delivered by post that morning to his residence, and which he threw away after the stabbing. Anita's DNA was found inside the sheath for the knife and on the Defendant's trainers.
10. The Defendant already had a history of schizophrenia and had 3 periods of in-patient care. In May 2024, his residence was Meridan House, a registered rehabilitation home which supported people with mental health problems to re-learn and develop independent living skills. The safety of the regime at that residence is not something on which I express any comment. No doubt others will consider it, hopefully soon.

11. The Defendant was first brought before this court on 14 May 2024 and bail was refused. On that occasion the judge noted that there were mental health/fitness issues. After that there were numerous hearings, but the Defendant was never arraigned. By November 2024 the Defendant had been transferred to Ashworth Hospital where he remains.
12. On 25 June 2025, the trial was fixed for 12 January 2026. At that time Dr Blackwood, a psychiatrist instructed by the Crown, was of the opinion that the Defendant was fit to be tried. In November 2025, (in a report ordered by me), Dr Higgins, the Defendant's treating clinician, tentatively agreed with Dr Blackwood.
13. On 2 December 2025 I became aware (via the mental health liaison nurse at this court) that the Defendant was unwell and apparently unfit to be tried. By 4 December 2025 it was clear that the Defendant was acutely unwell and that the fixed date would probably not be effective as a full jury trial. By 18 December 2025 that position was confirmed and the hearing on 12 January 2026 was fixed for me to determine the question of fitness.
14. On 12 January 2026 I heard evidence on oath from Dr Higgins and Dr Crosby (instructed by the Defence), colleagues at Ashworth. I will not rehearse all their evidence but they were both of the clear opinion that the Defendant was currently unfit to be tried. There is no evidence to the contrary and that has not changed in the last week.
15. Dr Higgins' opinion was that the treatment being given to the Defendant was ineffective. ECT for the Defendant's recent, life-threatening and lengthy episode of catatonia had had little effect. Dr Higgins expressly opined that it was impossible for the Defendant to have faked his catatonia.

16. All the doctors who have reported in this case recognise the possibility of a full jury trial should the Defendant recover sufficiently. It seems to me that, should he become fit to be tried, this is a case that must proceed to a full trial.
17. Significantly, both doctors were of the view that the Defendant currently fulfilled the criteria for orders under ss37 & 41 1983 Act. Although, where the offence on the Indictment is murder, I must make a s41 order, Dr Higgins has confirmed her opinion that a restriction order under s41 is required in this case in any event.
18. Dr Higgins also confirmed that there is a bed for the Defendant's continued treatment at Ashworth and the necessary arrangements have been made.
19. On Counts 1 & 2, I make orders under ss37 & 41 Mental Health Act 1983.
20. I hope Anita Mukhey's family and the public understand that the obvious concerns raised by this case will have to be examined and scrutinised elsewhere.

PHILIP KATZ KC.

23 January 2026.