



HIS HONOUR JUDGE ANDREW SMITH KC

THE RECORDER OF BIRMINGHAM

IN THE CROWN COURT AT BIRMINGHAM

THE KING -v- HAMZA KHAN and MOHAMMED RAHMAN

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Hamza Khan and Mohammed Rahman I sentence you both for the murder of Craig Dean following your conviction by the jury after trial.
2. The sentences I will impose are ones to which the statutory surcharge provisions apply and the appropriate orders will be drawn up.

The facts

3. By 7th July last year you were both involved on a near daily basis in the supply of heroin and crack cocaine to drug users in areas of suburban Birmingham which included Kings Heath. You were both known to the users you supplied as the Ace Line and it was for that reason you had met your victim Craig Dean. Someone known more familiarly to those in the local area as Yankee. Both of you had a transactional relationship with Mr Dean and he was someone who had directed other users to you to purchase drugs.
4. I am confident, based on the evidence received at trial, that you both considered Mr Dean was someone who should remain loyal to the Ace Line when it came to his purchasing drugs. The indifference that you both feigned in your evidence about whether he used other drug dealers, as he sometimes did, was

not, I am satisfied the reality that underlay the events on 7th July. On that day a dispute arose because Mr Dean had directed another drug user to a different dealer. Your ultimately fatal reaction to this very modest occurrence had absolutely no justification and can only be explained by your joint wish to exert control over individuals you regarded as your customers. I reject the submission made on behalf of you, Hamza Khan, that the language used by Mr Dean in text messaging that day provoked your joint, violent response or was in any way central to the attack. Having assessed with care the evidence as a whole, I am sure that it was your joint desire to exert control over those you supplied that explains your criminal actions and not anything said or done by Craig Dean.

5. I cannot be sure on the evidence that you were in Springfield Road for the sole reason of finding Mr Dean a little before 5pm that afternoon. I accept that you were continuing your criminal trade at the same time. However, I am sure that you had contemplated attacking Mr Dean if the opportunity arose. This is demonstrated by the fact that when you both spotted Mr Dean your actions were swift and violent. Each of you exited the car very shortly after you had pulled up and I am satisfied you both approached Mr Dean to take joint, violent action. Action designed to address your perception that you had been wronged and to punish Mr Dean in particular and send a message to the users of the Ace Line more widely.
6. Given the differences in the witness accounts about the events that were not recorded on CCTV, I will sentence both of you on the basis that there was an initial physical struggle involving Mr Dean. I am satisfied that this did not include Mr Dean using any form of weapon and involved, adopting the description of Megan O'Brien, pushing and shoving. This was a swiftly concluded phase of events and led to neither of you sustaining any injury whatsoever. Mr Dean's modest physical involvement is explained by you both having confronted him in the street. I reject, as the jury did, that you acted to any extent in self-defence from, at the latest, this moment in the events. Mr Dean fell to the ground. What precise mechanism caused him to fall or which of you was responsible for the fall is of no consequence. This was a joint attack

throughout and when Mr Dean was on the floor I am sure, taking the evidence as a whole, that you both kicked him to the head more than once.

7. There were at least 5 or 6 kicks delivered to Mr Dean's head as he lay on the hard floor. He was offering no resistance or threat. You must have realised Craig Dean was very seriously injured as you continued with your joint attack. Oliver Marley asked you to stop but you did not. The obvious anger and aggression you both demonstrated was to the exclusion of that appeal to stop your attack. This was a gratuitous attack in which you intended to cause really serious injury to Craig Dean. As Dr Du Plessis, the expert neuropathologist, explained in his evidence the kicks must have involved substantial force given the fatal arterial injury, the deep bruising to the neck and the widespread nerve fibre injury. It was the evidence of Oliver Marley that you, Mohammed Rahman, delivered what may have been the fatal, penalty style kick to Mr Dean's head. However, as I have already observed, precisely who delivered which kick out of the two of you matters not given this was a joint attack in which you shared the same intention.
8. Each of you gave what was, in my judgment, cynical and self-serving evidence about your lack of understanding of the severity of injury Mr Dean had sustained as you left the scene. I am sure you both knew he was very seriously injured as you went to cross the road back to the car. That one of you is heard to say on the audio track from the CCTV "fucking twat" or "fucking tramp" says much about your attitude to Mr Dean and your lack of concern for the fatal injuries you had caused. Neither of you has demonstrated any genuine remorse at any subsequent point.
9. That uncaring attitude is further demonstrated by your continuing to deal in drugs in the hour that followed. It was only the fact of an obvious police presence in Springfield Road that led to you, Hamza Khan, parking up. I note that you, Mohammed Rahman, accepted in evidence dealing drugs once more that evening. You, Mohammed Rahman, enlisted the help of someone else to dispose of the tracksuit you had been wearing at the time of the attack.

10. The evidence demonstrates that each of you learned of Mr Dean's death at the age of 53, despite the very best efforts of medical professionals, on 9th July 2025. That prompted both of you to seek to avoid detection. This involved ceasing to use your respective mobile phones and fleeing Birmingham. You, Hamza Khan, hid in rural Worcestershire and were only arrested because the police found you. You, Mohammed Rahman, went to Bangladesh and only returned because of family pressure. Both of you allowed close relatives to be arrested as part of the police investigation.

11. The profound consequences of the death of Craig Dean for his family, including his partner Laura Webb, have been made clear by the victim personal statements you have heard read and to which I have had close regard. Mr Dean was a father to three daughters and, as has been described, was someone who others looked to for love, support and kindness in the communities he had lived in both in the United States and in Birmingham. Mr Dean's absence is understandably keenly felt on an ongoing basis. No sentence available to the court can measure the enduring loss that will continue to be felt by those closest to Craig Dean.

The application of schedule 21

12. As you will both already know, the sentence in each of your cases must be one of life imprisonment. I have had to consider the appropriate starting point for the minimum term in your case in respect of schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020.

13. It is agreed that the appropriate starting point in your case is one of 15 years, paragraph 5 of schedule 21. There are no statutory aggravating features present in your case. For the avoidance of doubt, I do not accept the prosecution's submission, adopting the language of the schedule, that this was a sustained and excessive use of violence towards Mr Dean. I consider that the relatively short period of time in which you used fatal violence is not sufficient to be characterised as sustained. I recognise that there was repeated kicking but am not persuaded that the nature of the violent conduct in this case engages this

aggravating feature. Instead, I consider that the way in which you attacked Mr Dean is a matter I can take into account generally in setting the appropriate minimum term in your case.

14. It is properly accepted on behalf of each of you that there are a number of aggravating features. This offence is plainly substantially aggravated by this being a joint attack, in public, against a background of serious criminal offending and in support of your drug dealing. You both destroyed evidence by getting rid of your phones and both of you took significant steps to avoid arrest. In addition, both of you exposed a member of your family to arrest. I have concluded that this combination of aggravating features necessitates and justifies a significant upward adjustment from the 15 year starting point.
15. You Hamza Khan are 23 years old and were 22 years old at the time of the offence. You have received cautions for the possession of an offensive weapon, a public order offence and the possession of a Class A drug with intent to supply. This is an aggravating feature of your case. I accept that you have no previous convictions.
16. You Mohammed Rahman are 25 years old and were 24 years old at the time of the offence. You have a caution for malicious communication offences and convictions in 2020 for conspiracy to supply heroin and crack cocaine and in 2023 for going equipped for theft of a car. You received a sentence of forty months' imprisonment for your previous drugs offending. This is a substantially aggravating feature of your case. I acknowledge you have not previously been convicted of a violent offence.
17. Before taking account of mitigation, I assess the appropriate starting point for you Hamza Khan would have been 18 years and 6 months and for you Mohammed Rahman would have been 19 years. The difference between your respective starting points is explained by you Mohammed Rahman having far more serious previous convictions. As I have already set out, I do not draw a distinction between your roles in the offence and the aggravating features directly linked to the offence.

18. By way of mitigating factors, I accept that yours is a case that involved an intention to cause serious bodily harm rather than to kill. The weight that can be attached to this mitigating feature is, in my assessment, substantially reduced by the way in which you committed this offence and the level of violence that was involved. For the reasons I have already given, I reject the submission that the mitigating feature of provocation falling short of a defence is present in this case. Similarly, again for reasons I have already given, I am sure that you had both contemplated attacking Mr Dean if the opportunity arose. I recognise that both of you are still relatively young men.
19. I have read the various references and letters written about you and considered the personal mitigation advanced by your respective barristers. In my assessment, you each have similar mitigation available and that there is no distinction to be drawn in the reduction I will apply to the sentences I will pass. In addition, I have concluded that the aggravating features of this case outweigh the available mitigation.
20. You, Hamza Khan, have spent 221 days on remand and you, Mohammed Rahman, have spent 211 days on remand. I shall deduct those days from the minimum terms I impose.

The sentences

21. For the offence of murder, I sentence you both to a sentence of life imprisonment. Before deducting the time you have spent on remand, the minimum term in your case Hamza Khan would have been 17 years and in your case Mohammed Rahman would have been 17 years and 6 months. After the necessary deductions the minimum term in your case Hamza Khan is 16 years and 144 days and in your case Mohammed Rahman is 16 years and 336 days.
22. You must serve the entire minimum term before you can be considered for release on licence by the Parole Board. The Parole Board will decide if and when you are released and the terms of your licence. If and when you are released

you will remain on licence for the rest of your life. If you were to breach the terms of your licence you can be recalled to custody.

23. Separately to the sentences I have passed, may I express my condolences to the family and partner of Mr Dean.

24th February 2026