

IN THE CROWN COURT AT CARDIFF

THE KING

-v-

THISARA WERAGALAGE

SENTENCING REMARKS

There is a surcharge to pay and I make a collection order. Any correction to the calculation of days can be dealt with administratively without a court hearing.

1. You have pleaded guilty to the murder of Nirodha Niwunhella and to possessing a knife.
2. You stabbed Nirodha to death in a car park in Riverside, here in Cardiff, in the early morning of the 21st August last year. You had planned to murder her. It was a ferocious attack.
3. You and Nirodha married in Sri Lanka in 2017 and came to live in the UK in 2022. Within a short time of arriving in the UK it was clear to others that the relationship was not a happy one.
4. In early 2023 Nirodha met James Stephenson (“JS”) in a Care Home in Canton where they both worked. Nirodha and JS became close.
5. You learnt of their closeness and, to use your word, “spied” on them. On one occasion you went to the Care Home to speak to JS. By then Nirodha had complained of being subjected to violence by you.
6. In the Care Home, when a care worker confronted you with that claim, you said that it was Nirodha’s behaviour that had caused you to “raise your hand” to her, as you put it.
7. Your concerning behaviour caused Nirodha and JS to call off their relationship for a time but by April 2025 the distance between you and Nirodha had grown such that you moved to separate addresses. This allowed Nirodha and JS to embark upon a deeper relationship.
8. You could not accept that your marriage was at an end. You could not accept Nirodha making her own choices to live a life without you. Nirodha’s relationship with JS became your sole and obsessive focus.
9. You tried to get JS to persuade Nirodha to go back to you. You tried to get Nirodha’s father to do the same. You tried to persuade Nirodha herself. A message found on her phone sent to a friend on 10th July said that you were threatening to kill her and JS.

10. By August 2025 Nirodha was staying on occasion at JS's flat in South Morgan Place in Riverside. Between 8th and 19th August you drove to the car park outside his flat on 8 occasions checking on him and Nirodha.
11. On 20th August you went to the B&Q in Pentwyn, near your home address. You bought 3 knives. You planned to kill Nirodha the next morning.
12. On 21st August you called in sick at work. You drove to JS's flat and arrived there at 5.45am. The knives were in the boot of your car. You were wearing gloves. You sat in the car park and waited for Nirodha to leave the flat. She left for work at around 7.30am.
13. In the car park you confronted her. You were armed with one of the knives you had bought the day before. You set upon Nirodha. Nirodha sustained multiple defensive wounds, as well as multiple wounds to her face, neck, chest, arm and leg. Three of the wounds entered her chest cavity. She had no chance of surviving the attack. She sustained 20 wounds. The handle of the knife snapped from the blade during the assault.
14. Witnesses saw you move from between the parked cars where you had inflicted the fatal wounds. You were seen to take off your gloves and drive off. Police were called. Nirodha died at the scene.
15. You were subsequently arrested. You claimed in interview that you had no recollection of the murder. You maintain that account in the Pre Sentence Report. You portray yourself as the victim and only partially accept responsibility for that which you did.
16. That said, you have pleaded guilty and I give you the maximum credit that the law allows in these circumstances, namely a reduction in the custodial term which you must serve of one sixth.
17. Before I turn to sentence, the focus of my remarks thus far has been on your actions. It is time to reflect upon Nirodha and her all-too-short life. She was 32 when her life ended. She has been described as the kindest and most caring person you could meet. She radiated light and joy. She had a long and happy future ahead of her.
18. Nirodha's father and family remember her as a captivating child who went on to be a devoted daughter, and a constant friend to many. Your brutal selfishness has left a void which can never be filled and has left two ageing parents bereft.
19. I turn to sentence. The Court must have regard to the guidance in Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020 whilst having full regard to the features of this case.
20. You took a knife to the scene intending to use it to commit murder. The minimum term for such an offence is 25 years.

21. There are aggravating features:

- (i) There was a significant degree of planning and premeditation. You bought knives the day before and lay in wait outside the flat where you knew Nirodha to be,
- (ii) There was sustained and excessive violence,
- (iii) The murder was connected with Nirodha ending your relationship,
- (iv) This was a murder which took place in public, at 7.30am in a central residential area, the aftermath of which was witnessed.

22. As to mitigation:

- (i) You have no previous convictions. On the facts of this case that can afford you only limited mitigation having regard to your conduct towards Nirodha for some time towards the end of the relationship,
- (ii) Your plea of guilty.

23. The sentence upon Count 1, murder, is fixed by law. This means that there is only one sentence I can pass, namely a sentence of Life imprisonment.

24. I must decide the minimum period that you must serve before you are first considered for release on licence.

25. As I have said, I consider the appropriate starting point is 25 years but having considered all the features in the case, including the aggravating and mitigating features, the minimum term, had you been convicted following trial would have been 28 ½ years imprisonment.

26. Giving you credit for your plea of guilty, I reduce that by one sixth and fix the minimum term that you will serve in custody before the Parole Board may consider your possible release is 23 years and 9 months.

27. From this will be deducted the 181 days you have already spent on remand in custody so that the minimum term you will serve is **23 years and 92 days**.

28. The Parole Board will then decide whether you can leave custody at this stage and, if so, on what terms. If you are refused parole, you will remain in custody, subject to regular reviews by the Parole Board.

29. If and when you are released you will be on licence for the rest of your life. If you breach the terms of your licence you will be liable to return to custody.

30. The sentence upon Count 2, possession of a knife, is a determinate sentence of 2 years' imprisonment. Take him down.
31. The court extends its sympathy and condolences to Nirodha's family and friends.

HHJ Daniel Williams
20th February., 2026