

IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

THE KING

v

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Aalia Mahomed was just 20 years old when, almost exactly a year ago, she was killed by a dangerous driver.
2. Aalia's mother, Samira Shafi, tenderly describes her daughter as giving, loving and full of life. Aalia was academically gifted, always adventurous and keen to explore every life opportunity. Aalia was studying Physics and Philosophy at King's College, London. When she was killed on 18 March 2025, Aalia was looking forward to a summer break in her studies and was making plans for her future. Samira Shafi describes her daughter as a social butterfly whose funeral 10 days later, was attended by thousands, reminding her mother of how Aalia was loved by so many and had touched so many lives.
3. Aalia's father, Shameer Mahomed, says his daughter had an ability, and actively enjoyed, looking at things from other perspectives, from different angles. Aalia was ambitious, thought deeply and read widely. Each memory of his daughter is full of laughter and he now mourns that there will be no more opportunities to laugh with her.
4. Aalia's younger brother Zain spoke eloquently at her funeral and read his eulogy today. He describes his sister as a genius, hardworking and with a smile

sharp enough to cut through steel. Aalia treated people far better than Zain has ever seen anyone else do and took care of everyone like they were family. Last summer, Zain and his mother went to the Royal Festival Hall to collect Aalia's final degree which can only have been a deeply distressing experience for them both.

5. I have quoted only very short passages from the victim impact evidence given by the members of Aalia's family. It is simply not possible to overstate the impact of Aalia's killing on them, as well as on Aalia's wider family and friends. I will have regard to their full accounts which speak with grace, dignity and eloquence of their profound loss and crushing grief. What shone brightly was their pride in who Aalia was.
6. The dangerous driver who caused Aalia's death, also caused life changing injuries to two other King's students – Yamin Belmessous and Irem Yoldas. For wholly understandable reasons, neither of them wished their impact statements to be read out in court. Their wishes have been honoured and I will only say that their evidence is a humbling testament to their courage, resilience and strength of character. Quite apart from the unimaginable pain and suffering they have already endured, each of them faces huge uncertainties and challenges in relation to their future health, careers and wellbeing. The impact on them could not be more severe. They could easily have been killed.
7. You, Christopher Jackson, must live with the knowledge that you are the driver who caused all this dreadful damage. To your credit, you have never denied it. You must have realised quite quickly that there would be serious consequences for many people, including your own family and loved ones and I accept that it has been and will continue to be hard for you to come terms with. On the

evidence, I can accept that your remorse was immediate and genuine and you have continued to express it sincerely. I observed your sadness when you pleaded guilty as members of the victims' families watched on, and also today. The letter you wrote to me, and your partner's letter, provide unequivocal evidence of your empathy for all the victims. Your conscience will never be clear.

8. A judge cannot reverse or truly heal the damage done by those whose dangerous driving causes death and serious injury to others. Nothing a judge can do or say will lessen the grief of any parent who loses a child, or of a young person whose bright future has suddenly become uncertain. The whole criminal justice process may seem brutal and uncaring, but – at the end of it – a judge must do justice, according to law.
9. The 18 March 2025, was a bright, sunny day. You came by train to London with a work colleague to collect two Ford eTransit vans from a car park next to Bush House in The Strand. The plan was to drive them back to business premises in Southampton. You were not employed as a driver, but you were licensed and insured to drive.
10. Your colleague was comfortable with driving an electric van. However, you had never driven an electric vehicle before. You told the author of the pre-sentence report that, although you were a bit nervous, you felt confident to drive the vehicle.
11. I accept that there are many circumstances in which people drive cars with which they are not familiar, such as rental cars. But, in my judgment, any careful and competent driver will satisfy themselves that they can drive the car safely before they set off.

12. Of course, this was a car, it was a commercial van. You had no experience of driving vans, let alone electric vans.
13. Why anyone thought it was a good idea to ask you to perform this task is hard to fathom. It may not be realistic to have expected you to refuse to perform it. On the other hand, this was not a sudden decision and there was plenty of opportunity for you to consider the serious and obvious risks you were taking.
14. Further, although you had not been to the location before, you must have realised that it was a busy location in the West End of London and that you would be starting your journey back in the middle of the day, when the whole area would be full of traffic and pedestrians.
15. This was not just a “tragic accident”. Any careful and competent driver in your position, even before you travelled to London that day, would have realised that to drive that vehicle at all presented serious and obvious risks to people’s safety, including your own. Your culpability for the disaster that you caused, lies in the fact that either you gave no thought to those risks or your misplaced confidence caused you to ignore them.
16. Having now watched the CCTV, it is clear that you did not get in and start to drive immediately. It may be that you took a little time to familiarise yourself with the interior and the controls. But, if you checked the pedals, it is hard to understand how you pressed the wrong one.
17. The van was parked in a car park in Bush House. It was facing south, towards an exit which is only for emergency use, and which has padlocked gates. On the other side of those heavy, cast iron gates is the pedestrianised area between Bush House and the church of St Mary le Strand. The area is planted and has seating for the students, local workers and the many visitors who use

it daily. At 11.30, Aalia Mohamed was sitting on a bench, with her back to the gates, enjoying the sunshine with a friend. Yamin Belmessous and Irem Yoldas were pedestrians. She was on the phone in front of the gates and he was about to cross paths with her. They were each entitled to feel that that they were safe from motor vehicles.

18. The proper exit for vehicles is at the other side of the car park. Your colleague drove out of that exit and set off on his journey.
19. The van you drove was parked behind another vehicle, with an empty parking space in between. That meant that you had to perform some sort of reverse manoeuvre to get out of the car park. The evidence suggests you did not reverse the van at all. It seems likely to me that you intended to put the vehicle into reverse gear but you put it into drive instead.
20. I am satisfied that as soon as you put the van in motion, you were taken by surprise. A witness saw it in your face. You probably did not realise that an electric vehicle delivers the torque instantaneously, providing maximum power from the moment the accelerator is depressed. There is no lag and no typical noise.
21. It is accepted that you were pressing or pumping on the accelerator thinking it was the brake. That genuine pedal error led to what experts refer to as unintentional acceleration. The effect was that you lost control of the van.
22. However, you did not drive straight into the vehicle in front. You swerved round it to avoid it and then accelerated towards the locked gates. You drove straight through the gates at significantly over 20 mph, causing them to fall on to Yamin Belmessous and Irem Yoldas. You then ploughed into the bench on which Aalia Mohamed was sitting and carried on over her body until the van crashed to a

halt in a planted area next to the church. That whole dreadful journey took about 6 seconds.

23. The emergency services tried to save Aalia but she died at the scene.
24. It is clear that you were in shock when you got out of the van and realised what had happened. You stayed at the scene and did your best to co-operate. From the start you took full responsibility for your actions. At the first opportunity, you pleaded guilty to the criminal offences with which you were charged, all the while knowing that you would go to prison. For all of this you will receive appropriate credit.
25. In deciding the appropriate sentence I must have regard to the Sentencing Council Guideline. For the purposes of the sentencing guideline for Count 1, the offence of causing death by dangerous driving, it is agreed that this was a Category B offence. That is because the facts do not fit into Category C, and the only relevant, partial element of Category A is your disregard of the obvious risks of dangers to others. Category B offences attract a starting point of 6 years imprisonment, with a range of 4-9 years.
26. Of course no one suggests that you intended to cause the harm you did, or indeed any harm. Had you intended harm you might have been charged with a different, and more serious, offence.
27. The driving was for a matter of seconds and was not a prolonged, persistent or deliberate course of dangerous driving. That does not mitigate your offence because those factors would have placed it in Category A.
28. As to the listed aggravating factors which do apply, it is obvious that the victims were all vulnerable. Two were pedestrians, and one was sitting in an area

where they were all entitled to believe themselves safe from contact with motor vehicles, let alone dangerous drivers.

29. Although you were not employed as a driver, you were driving a commercial vehicle the size and weight of which increased the risks of death and serious injury.

30. I am not persuaded that reference to other cases is of any help to me.

31. As to mitigating factors, you had a clean driving licence and I am prepared to ignore the fact that you were subject to a court order in relation to an entirely different sort of offence.

32. I have already referred to your remorse which provides you with mitigation over and above the credit for your early guilty pleas.

33. You have been a hardworking father of 3 young children. They and your partner will also be impacted by your prison sentence.

34. There is a factor listed in the guideline which is in the following terms:

Offence due to inexperience rather than irresponsibility (where the offender qualified to drive).

In my judgment, there was a significant level of irresponsibility in this case as well as a lack of experience of driving electric vans. If, as seems likely, that factor was designed for a case of a driver who has just passed a relevant driving test, then that does not apply to you.

35. Had Count 1 stood alone, the appropriate sentence, before credit for plea, would have been above the starting point but below the top of the range.

36. I must take into account the other offences to which you have pleaded guilty, namely Counts 2 & 3 – offences of causing serious injury by dangerous driving. There are different ways to do this. I shall treat Count 1 as the lead offence

because there was one, short, course of dangerous driving. I shall pass sentences on Counts 2 & 3 which are concurrent to each other as well as concurrent to the sentence on Count 1. However, Counts 2 & 3 substantially aggravate Count 1. In doing so, I do not minimise Counts 2 & 3 or disrespect the victims as individuals. I am simply applying the totality guideline.

37. Under the separate guideline for the offences, Counts 2 & 3 were Category B1 offences, indicting a starting point of 3 years imprisonment for each offence, with a range of 2-4 years. Had I been sentencing only on Counts 2 & 3, the total appropriate sentence would have been no less than 6 years.

38. The calculation of the final sentence is not a purely mathematical exercise. Applying the principles to which I have referred I must impose the least sentence that properly reflects the overall criminality.

39. Before credit for your early guilty pleas, the total appropriate sentence would be one of 12 years imprisonment. You are of course entitled to full credit for those pleas of guilty.

40. Count 1: 8 years' imprisonment, of which you will serve two-thirds, before being released on licence. Your time in custody will count and I have taken account of the period of non-qualifying curfew.

41. Count 2: 3 years' imprisonment concurrent.

42. Count 3: 3 years' imprisonment concurrent.

43. Disqualification from driving: 5 years, with an extension of 64 months. You must pass a compulsory re-test before you drive again.

44. Statutory surcharge imposed.