

IN THE CROWN COURT AT MAIDSTONE

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v

DORIN CIORBA

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Dorin Ciorba, you may remain seated for the time being.
2. These sentencing remarks will be made available in writing shortly after this hearing.
3. On 5 July 2025 you killed Osaretin Oronsaye in his own home. On 12 February this year you were convicted of his murder and robbery. The court is sitting today to sentence you for that offence.
4. Nothing the court can say or do will ever bring Mr Oronsaye back to life or make up for his loss. A murder cuts short a single life, but it does not end there. On the contrary, the impact is felt by very many others. Every person is unique and special in their own way and Mr Oronsaye was loved and valued by many – his mother, his wife, his brothers and sisters, his children. You have heard the Victim Impact Statements read on behalf of his wife, Oghomwen Ogebor, his brother, Martins and his son, Jeremy. Without exception, they all say what a good man he was – the glue that held the family together and who was loved by all. Someone who was hard-working, yet still managed to care for his 95-year old mother as well as his children in Nigeria and Germany and his wife.
5. His son, Jeremy, refers to all the events in his life since last July that he has not been able to share with his father due to your actions. He speaks about how his younger brothers will

have no memory of him at all and how *“you have robbed them of all the experiences that sons should have with their father as well as his love, care and protection.”*

6. Oghomwen Ogebor describes what a good husband he was to her, and how, despite their difficulties, they were working things out and had planned for the future together. She describes how she is frozen in the moment when she found his body and does not know whether she will ever escape it. She says, *“I dare not imagine what his last moments were like as it brings me such pain and heartache.”* She describes how she suffers from panic attacks when she sees places they visited together or even visits her doctor near Dunlop Close. *“Everything”,* she says, *“is a reminder of what I was lost”*.
7. Martins says that the family has felt unable to tell his mother what happened to her son as they fear that she would not be able to bear it. He says *“it is as if part of our soul as a family has been ripped from us... I feel as if a piece of me died with my brother that day and I am no longer the person I was before. I have been exposed to so much evil; it has been difficult on most days to move forward.”*
8. It is clear that all these people have suffered an irreparable loss as a result of your crime. And all of them find his brutal murder at your hands – someone he knew and trusted - utterly inexplicable. As Martins says, *“My brother was brutally tortured and for what? Money, his phone, his pin. Nothing can justify that level of violence. My brother was left alone to die with the knowledge of never seeing us all again, that his sons would lose their father and that he had let his murderer into his home willingly. A person he trusted and recommended to others. Why would someone do such a thing to another human being? It is inhumane.”* Even worse, it was left to his family to defend him against the false and vile accusations you made about him being a homosexual and a drug dealer when he was unable to speak up for himself. That was to add insult to injury.
9. These people, just as much as you, are in their own way being sentenced, but in their case it is a sentence of loss which they will have to bear for the rest of their lives. The court offers its deep sympathy to all those who mourn the loss of Osaretin Oronsaye and pays tribute to the quiet dignity with which members of his family gave evidence and sat through some of the trial and listened to what must have been extremely distressing evidence as to the manner in which he died and the wounds that you inflicted on him. The value to them

of Mr Oronsaye's life is incalculable and I am acutely aware that no sentence I impose on you can even begin to reflect the value adequately.

10. Your own family too will have now to live with the consequences of your crime and they also will suffer as a result, particularly your young son who will now be deprived of the presence of his father.
11. All that the court can do now is to dispense justice dispassionately according to the law in the hope that, at least to some extent, a line has been drawn under the past, so that his family and friends can move on with their lives as best they can, cherishing their memories of him in happier times.
12. The sentence for the grave offence of murder is fixed by law under section 275 of the Sentencing Code. This means that there is only one sentence I can pass, namely a sentence of life imprisonment and that is the sentence that I shall impose upon you in due course. However, the Sentencing Code further requires me to set a minimum term which you must serve in custody. It is important for everyone to understand that you will not automatically be released at the end of this minimum term: it merely marks the earliest date at which the Parole Board can consider releasing you on licence.
13. To set the minimum term, I must consider the seriousness of your offence, taking into account the considerations set out in Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Code as well as all other relevant factors both for and against you, and guidance from any applicable case law.
14. It is therefore necessary for me to consider the circumstances of the case. For this purpose, I must sentence you only on the basis of the facts of which I am sure. The starting point is the jury's verdict but I further take into account other relevant matters of which I am sure to the criminal standard of proof based on all of the evidence at trial. Where there is any doubt, you are entitled to the benefit of that doubt. In this exercise, I have been assisted by sentencing notes and oral submissions from both the prosecution and defence for which I am most grateful. The defence has not asked for a pre-sentence report to be obtained and I do not believe that one is necessary in this case. I have listened carefully to all the evidence and observed you throughout the trial, and I do not consider that a report would materially assist me in setting a minimum term.

The facts

15. You are still a young man – only a few days short of your 30th birthday. You have dual Romanian/Moldovan nationality, and you have been in the UK for 6 years working as a construction labourer and electrician. You had known Mr Oronsaye since late 2023 when you first started carrying out various jobs for him as a handyman at his home at 2 Dunlop Close in Dartford. You went to his house several times and by all accounts you had a good relationship with him. He was pleased with the quality of your work and used to recommend you to his clients.
16. In late April 2025, you carried out another job for him involving tiling and work on the toilet, shower and shower glass in the ensuite bathroom. You were assisted with this work by a friend of yours, Vlad Sirbu, another Romanian whom you had known for about four years. Mr Sirbu also worked in construction, and from time to time you got him work on building sites. Money passed between you on numerous occasions. On your own admission, he also supplied you with drugs.
17. Mr Oronsaye paid you in full for the work you carried out in April and May but subsequently claimed successfully for it on his insurance. However, the insurers insisted on paying the money to you as the contractor and so it was agreed between you and Mr Oronsaye that you would transfer the money to Mr Oronsaye as soon as you received it from the insurers. There was some delay in the insurers making the payment and you were well aware that Mr Oronsaye was anxious to receive the money as he was chasing you throughout the latter part of May and early June to see whether you had received it. Eventually, it was paid to you on 28 May 2025, but instead of paying it straight over to Mr Oronsaye as agreed, you proceeded to spend the vast majority of it. You claimed that you did not know that this payment related to the insurance monies, but since the amount you received was exactly the same as the amount of the invoice that you had submitted I reject this. I am sure that you knew exactly what the money was, but chose to spend it instead on other needs which you no doubt regarded as more pressing.
18. I am also sure that you did not make any subsequent part payment to Mr Oronsaye in cash as you claimed. You say that you nonetheless spoke to Mr Oronsaye and agreed to discharge the debt by working for free instead. While there is no direct evidence confirming this, I cannot be sure that there was no such agreement and accordingly I assume in your favour that there was.

19. On 2 July, Mr Oronsaye sent you pictures of some grouting in the ensuite shower which he said needed attention. He followed this with several unsuccessful attempts to contact you. You claim that you spoke to him on 3 July and agreed to go to 2 Dunlop Close on 5 July to have a look at it. However, I am sure on the evidence that you did not return any of Mr Oronsaye's calls or send him any messages, or speak to him and that there was in fact no prior agreement for you to attend the flat on 5 July.
20. On the evening of 4 July, Mr Oronsaye issued an online claim against you in the County Court seeking payment of the money which you owed him. An automated email attaching the claim form was sent to you at 2121 that evening but was marked as unread in the email inbox on your phone. I am satisfied that you did not read the email and that you were therefore not aware of the proceedings until you received a hard copy in the post some days later.
21. Nonetheless, you went to 2 Dunlop Close on 5 July after you finished work in Nine Elms and arrived at around 1413 wearing a white hoodie, green T-shirt, white socks and fingerless cycling gloves as well as your trainers and shorts. At around 1443 you left, but this time without the hoodie, T-shirt, white socks or gloves and instead wearing a black T-shirt and dark socks. In the intervening period the jury has found that you murdered Mr Oronsaye and robbed him of his wallet, keys and mobile phone. The injuries found on his body were multiple and distressing. He had three severe injuries to the back of his head and one to the side of his forehead which I am satisfied were inflicted by banging his head against the foot of a portable radiator. He had stab wounds to his neck and arm which had been inflicted using a pair of scissors. One of these stab wounds penetrated his jugular vein. He had also been strangled manually. Finally, he had been throttled using two pairs of cable ties drawn round his neck. These had been applied from behind so tightly that the attending paramedic had difficulty inserting his scissors to cut them off. The batch numbers on the cable ties matched those of cable ties missing from a pack later found at your home address and I am satisfied that they were yours and that you had the pack in your rucksack when you went to the flat.
22. The undisputed forensic evidence was that the head injuries were not fatal and that Mr Oronsaye must have survived for at least 30-35 minutes after they were inflicted. By contrast, the stab wound to the jugular vein and the neck compression from the cable ties would each have been capable of killing him almost immediately and must have been

inflicted within minutes of each other. His fear and suffering in the half hour before he died can only be imagined.

23. After you killed Mr Oronsaye, you took his wallet, phone and keys and made off, locking the door behind you. You then embarked on a tour of cashpoints and shops in East London and withdrew as much cash from Mr Oronsaye's accounts as you could before the accounts and cards were blocked. I am sure that the reason you were able to do this was because you had tortured Mr Oronsaye in order to obtain his PIN numbers and passcodes before killing him and, by their verdict, the jury must have been sure of this as well. You enlisted the assistance of others, Mr Niculae and Mr Bondrea, in maximising the amount you were able to withdraw from Mr Oronsaye's accounts.
24. What is wholly unexplained on the evidence is why you carried out this brutal crime on a man who had shown no ill-will or aggression towards you but, on the contrary, had put work your way and with whom you had shared an apparently friendly relationship over several years.
25. Your defence rested on an elaborate story that Mr Oronsaye was involved in drug dealing and was supplying drugs to Mr Sirbu. You said that Mr Sirbu had somehow found out that you were intending to go to Mr Oronsaye's flat to do some work that day and that he told you to leave a window open when you left so that he or his associates could gain access to the flat to steal drugs and money. You said that you agreed to do so because Mr Sirbu threatened to harm your partner and young child if you did not. You then said that when you arrived Mr Oronsaye was unusually wearing a dressing gown and boxer shorts and that after you had completed the grouting work, he made a sexual advance to you, suggesting you had sexual relations with him in exchange for letting you off your debt. You claim to have panicked and given him a single push in order to forestall what you thought was a sexual assault so that he fell backwards into the bedroom, possibly hitting his head on the radiator. You then fled and picked up Mr Oronsaye's belongings in a moment of panic, but not, however, before opening the window as instructed by Mr Sirbu and locking the front door behind you.
26. It is clear from the jury's verdict that they did not believe this story and nor do I. There was not a shred of evidence to suggest that Mr Oronsaye was involved in any way with drugs or drug dealing, or that he had any homosexual tendencies. The fact that he was

wearing his dressing gown and boxer shorts is explicable by the fact that he sometimes used his dressing gown as a housecoat when he was at home and not expecting visitors. He was in the middle of cooking when you arrived, and I am satisfied to the criminal standard that he had no idea you would be coming that day and that this is why he was dressed as he was.

27. What then was your motive for the killing? While it is not necessary for the prosecution to establish a motive, they suggested that you killed him in response to the court claim which had been issued against you. However, I have already said that I accept that you were not aware of the claim. I also cannot be sure that you intended to kill Mr Oronsaye when you set out to go to his flat. Not only did you not take any steps to conceal your identity, but the fatal injuries were inflicted with the scissors and the cable ties. It is not suggested that you took the scissors with you and it is improbable in the extreme that you set out with an intention to kill, simply hoping that you would find a murder weapon to hand. A pack of cable ties is not the most obvious murder weapon of choice and in any event, they can only have been applied after Mr Oronsaye was already incapacitated. This very much suggests that you used them as an afterthought. As for the change of clothes, I cannot be sure that you deliberately took a spare T-shirt with you. You may just have happened to have a work T-shirt in your bag.
28. While no-one apart from you will ever know for certain, I suspect that you were heavily in debt to your drug supplier, Mr Sirbu, and that he had demanded payment and threatened some sort of adverse consequences if you did not comply. It is therefore plausible that he did indeed wait for you after work on 5 July and give you some sort of ultimatum. Whether at his suggestion or not, you then went to 2 Dunlop Close intending to rob Mr Oronsaye and get hold of some money that way. When you arrived, you pretended that you had come to do some work in the shower and took off your shoes as you always did when you went there. You then overpowered Mr Oronsaye and tried to extort his PIN numbers and banking app codes by using force against him. When he did not co-operate, you panicked and attempted to get the information by strangling him manually and stabbing him in the neck and mouth with the scissors which you found lying to hand.
29. Eventually, he provided the information which you needed, and you then killed him by inflicting the fatal stab wound with the scissors. To make absolutely sure that he would not survive, you took some of the cable ties which you happened to have in your rucksack as

part of your tools of your trade and pulled them tightly round his neck. You also put a piece of string round his testicles, whether as an additional means of torture or to lay the ground for your fabricated account of a sexual assault. You then took his wallet and phone and also his keys so that there was in fact no possibility of him raising the alarm even if he did by some miracle revive. You changed out of your hoodie, T-shirt, socks and gloves because they were bloodstained, stuffed them into your rucksack (where they left the small bloodstain which was later discovered), locked the door and cycled off, leaving Mr Oronsaye's unsuspecting wife to come home a few hours later to the unbelievable horror of what you had done. Perhaps covering his body with the duvet cover was intended as a belated mark of respect. If so, it is a respect that you signally failed to show him when he was alive.

30. As I say, I cannot be sure that this was the precise course of events, although it would explain why you thereafter devoted your immediate energies to obtaining as much money as possible from Mr Oronsaye's accounts as quickly as possible. And it may well be that you did give that money to Mr Sirbu on 6 July as you claimed.

31. I must not, of course, sentence you on the basis of speculation, only on the basis of the facts of which I am sure. However, in the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, I cannot be sure that you went to 2 Dunlop Close either intending to kill Mr Oronsaye or equipped to kill him. Rather I am satisfied that your initial intention was to rob him. However, I am sure that you tortured him in order to obtain his PIN numbers and pass codes and that you did form an intention to kill him when you had obtained the information you needed. The final application of the cable ties leaves no room for doubt that, at the critical point, your intention was to kill and not merely to inflict really serious harm.

Schedule 21

32. This is the background against which I must determine the minimum term which you must serve following the guidance in Schedule 21.

33. I should say at the outset that a "whole life" order is not required in your case. Cases where that order is imposed are very rare and, while your offence was grave, it does not fall within the categories of exceptionally serious case where a whole life order is justified.

34. On the basis that you were unaware of the County Court claim against you, I reject the prosecution submission that this was a murder intended to obstruct or interfere with that claim. I remind myself that the guidelines in Schedule 21 are not prescriptive and are not to be applied inflexibly. Undoubtedly, however, this was a murder committed in the course of a robbery and I am also sure that it was committed in consequence of, and following, your attempts to extort Mr Oronsaye's PIN numbers and passcodes. As such, it was a murder committed for gain. It is accordingly common ground between counsel that the starting point under Schedule 21 is therefore 30 years.
35. Every case has its own specific aggravating and mitigating features and I must take all of these into account in deciding whether to make any upward or downward adjustment from that starting point so as to achieve a just result and a sentence which is appropriate to the gravity and seriousness of your offence.

Aggravating features

36. As to the statutory aggravating features set out in paragraph 9 of Schedule 21, I am not satisfied that the murder was premeditated in the sense that you went to Dunlop Close with the settled intention of killing Mr Oronsaye and had planned and equipped yourself to do so when you set out. However, this was a brutal attack where I have found that you tortured Mr Oronsaye to obtain his PIN numbers using sustained and excessive violence against him and thereby inflicted serious mental and physical suffering on him. While I do not regard these as separate aggravating factors, they nonetheless warrant a considerable uplift.
37. There are also other features which aggravate your offence.
- (a) The murder was committed in a domestic setting, in Mr Oronsaye's own home where he should have been entitled to feel safe. Whether or not this amounts to an abuse of trust as this expression is interpreted in the authorities, you took advantage of your friendly personal and working relationship with him and his trust in you as a pretext for going to his home and gaining entry.
- (b) You disposed of your bloodied clothing in an attempt to avoid detection.

Mitigating features

38. So far as mitigation is concerned, your counsel has found little to be said in your favour save that you have no previous convictions, cautions or warnings anywhere in the world.

You are therefore of good character and that counts materially in your favour. I have already referred to the lack of premeditation. However, you have not expressed any remorse for what you did beyond saying at one point in your evidence that you were sorry that you continued to use Mr Oronsaye's bank cards. I cannot therefore make any reduction from your sentence on that ground. Nor can I make any reduction on account of your age. While you were relatively young, you were 29 at the time of the offence and in my judgment sufficiently mature to take full responsibility for your actions.

39. Your mother and your partner have provided character references for you. These both emphasise what a responsible and respectful person you once were and how you played a valuable part in community life and have always been an essential support for your family. Your partner describes the close relationship you have with your young son and the difficulties she will now face bringing him up alone and facing the inevitable questions about where you are and why. This makes your actions in murdering Mr Oronsaye even more inexplicable, but I regret that none of it can excuse those actions or provide a reason for reducing your sentence. They are simply part of the consequences which must inevitably flow from your conduct that day. I recognise that this will undoubtedly be hard for your family, and they may not be familiar with the way in which the judicial process operates in this country. However, I must sentence you according to law for the crime that you have committed and I am afraid that they, like you, will have to accept the outcome of that process.
40. Weighing the aggravating and mitigating factors, and taking care to avoid double-counting, I conclude that if I were sentencing you for the murder alone, there should be an uplift of 2 years to the starting point.
41. However, I must also sentence you for the robbery. Since this was part and parcel of the same incident as the murder, and as your determinate sentence already takes account of the fact that it was committed in the course of the robbery, the two sentences will run concurrently.
42. Applying the guideline for robbery, I am satisfied that the violence you inflicted on Mr Oronsaye amounted to significant force making this an offence of high culpability. There can be no dispute that you inflicted the highest category of harm on Mr Oronsaye by causing

his death. The starting point for an offence falling within category A1 is accordingly 13 years custody with a range from 10-16 years.

43. I am not persuaded that you took Mr Oronsaye's keys and phone in order to stop him seeking help or assistance. Your primary motivation was to steal and, sadly, by the time you left the flat, he was long past needing any assistance. All other relevant aggravating and mitigating factors have already been taken into account when sentencing you for the murder and so I will not double-count them.
44. Your sentence for the robbery is accordingly 13 years and, as I have said this will be served concurrently with your sentence for murder.
45. The statutory surcharge will also apply in the appropriate amount.
46. I am conscious of the fact that you will now spend all of your productive adult life in prison, separated from your partner, your young son, your parents and other family and your friends. What you have done has no doubt come as a profound shock and source of horror and shame to them. Your son will be deprived of a father not only for all of his formative years but until he is older than you are now. You have let them all down badly and that is something on which you may care to reflect. However, it is rare for a human being to be totally beyond all redemption, and you are still a young man. I therefore profoundly hope that you will take advantage of all opportunities available to you while in custody to gain some insight into what it was that led you to commit this truly terrible crime and to address the behaviours which led to it.

SENTENCE

47. Dorin Ciorba, will you please stand.
48. The sentence I pass upon you for the murder of Osaretin Oronsaye is one of LIFE IMPRISONMENT. For the reasons I have explained, I fix the minimum term which you must serve at 32 years. From that must be deducted the 241 days that you have been in custody since your arrest, bringing the final minimum term down to 31 years 4 months and 2 days.
49. The minimum term must be served in full before you are eligible to be considered for release by the Parole Board. I repeat that there is no guarantee that you will be released at

the end of this minimum period. It simply marks the earliest point at which the Parole Board can consider you for release. It is entirely a matter for them to decide whether you can leave custody at that stage and they will only do so after considering whether there is still a risk of you causing further harm to the public and whether you are ready for release. If you are refused parole, you will remain in custody subject to further regular reviews.

50. If they decide to release you, you would ordinarily then be released into the community on licence for the rest of your life, but in your case, since you are a foreign national, and since I have imposed a qualifying sentence, you are liable in principle to automatic deportation to your home country. The earliest point at which you may be deported will be on completion of the minimum term, or such later date as the Parole Board decide you may be released. However, there may be a delay in your case in the operation of the automatic deportation provisions or there may be a particular reason in your case why the provisions do not apply to you at all, in which case you will be released into the community on licence. In that event you must comply with all conditions on your licence for the rest of your life, or your deportation, whichever comes first. That licence will be subject to conditions, which will be set at the time of your release. If you were to break any of those conditions or if you were to reoffend in any way, you would be liable to be returned to prison to continue to serve your sentence and might not be released again.

51. I repeat my thanks to the police, legal teams, court staff and the jury, for everything they have done to bring this sad case to a conclusion. And I end by paying tribute once more to the family of Osaretin Oronsaye who have shown nothing but dignity and restraint in the face of overwhelming and inexplicable personal tragedy.