

**IN THE CROWN COURT**

**Sitting in Cambridge**

**Thursday 4 June 2026**

**Rex**

**V**

**Chas Corrigan**

**Sentencing remarks**

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Mr Justice Dexter Dias :

**Facts**

1. Mohammed Algasim was a student from Saudi Arabia. He came to Cambridge to study. On the evening of 1 August 2025, at 7 minutes past 11, he was heading back to his student flat from Cambridge railway station. He lived on Mill Park Road, very close to the station itself.
2. He met some friends and 15 minutes later was sitting on the stoop leading up to the student block chatting to people he knew. It was then that he was approached by a person he had never met before. This was at 11.24 pm.
3. At first this man asked the group something. There was a momentary exchange of words. Whether it was about a lighter or simply asking the time, it appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary. It did not stay that way.
4. The exchange was over quickly and the man walked off. Somebody within the group called out towards him and the man turned back. At that point, his demeanour changed. He approached Mr Algasim who was still sitting. He moved very close to him and lowered his face toward the seated person. In response, Mr Algasim stood up. Within seconds, the other man took out a large knife that he had hidden within his shorts. He swung it twice. The knife was an 8-inch kitchen knife. It cut through flesh of Mr Algasim's neck.
5. The knife blade severed both his carotid artery and his jugular vein. It penetrated right through the left-hand side of his neck until it met the jawbone on the right-hand side of his head. The blade made an incision in the bone on that opposite side, an indication of how the knife went right through Mr Algasim's neck. As a result, Mr Algasim sustained massive blood loss. The pathologist Dr Virginia Fitzpatrick Swallow described this as "torrential". The massive blood loss and loss of blood pressure brought on cardiac arrest. The resulting

heart attack killed Mr Algasim. Mohammed Yousef Algasim was 20 years old when he was killed by a complete stranger.

6. The man who stabbed him in the neck with a kitchen knife is Chas Corrigan, the defendant in this case.

### **The conviction**

7. Chas Corrigan was born on 22 November 2003. He was 21 at the time of the murder and is now aged 22. On 2 March 2026, he was convicted of Mr Algasim's murder following a trial I conducted with a jury in the Crown Court sitting at Cambridge.
8. Prior to the trial, on 8 September 2025, the defendant pleaded guilty to the offence of having a bladed article contrary to section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. This was for the possession of the murder weapon.

### **Documents considered**

9. I have read all the documents the parties have asked me to consider. The pre-sentence report ("PSR") is written by Jake Coe of the Cambridge Probation Office and dated 27 March 2026. There are two victim personal statements ("VPSs") from the deceased's family and his cousin (also Mr Algasim) read them out very affectingly to the court. I have read a letter the defendant has written and have examined many certificates he has earned by completing courses while in custody. There are several character references tendered on his behalf. I have read these also. There are sentencing notes prepared by counsel, to whom I am grateful.
10. I have considered Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Code 2000 and the General Guideline: Overarching Principles. For the section 139 offence, I have considered the specific offence guideline, the guideline on totality and the guideline on reduction in sentence for a guilty plea.

### **Legal framework**

11. The sentencing framework in cases of murder is heavily regulated by statutory provision. Section 1(1) of the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965 requires that an offender who is convicted of murder must be sentenced to imprisonment for life. However, in cases where a whole life order is not appropriate, it is also necessary for the court to make an order under section 321 of the Sentencing Act 2020 ("the 2020 Act") which, by subsection (2), must be a minimum term order. No one has submitted that the statutory test for a whole life order is met here. I therefore must consider the appropriate minimum term.
12. Para 4 of Schedule 21 of the 2020 Act provides as relevant:

“4(1) If—

(a) the case does not fall within paragraph 2(1) or 3(1),

(b) the offence falls within sub-paragraph (2),

(c) the offender was aged 18 or over when the offence was committed, and

(d) the offence was committed on or after 2 March 2010,

the offence is normally to be regarded as sufficiently serious for the appropriate starting point, in determining the minimum term, to be 25 years.

(2) The offence falls within this sub-paragraph if the offender took a knife or other weapon to the scene intending to—

(a) commit any offence, or

(b) have it available to use as a weapon,

and used that knife or other weapon in committing the murder.”

13. The seriousness of the offence is assessed by evaluation of the murder in combination with any other associated offences. The court must have regard under section 322(3) of the 2020 Act to the general principles set out in Schedule 21 and relevant sentencing guidelines not incompatible with Schedule 21.

14. Paragraphs 7 to 11 of Schedule 21 set out aggravating and mitigating factors. Having chosen a starting point, the court should take into account any aggravating or mitigating factors, to the extent that it has not allowed for them in its choice of starting point.

### **Findings**

15. I make the following findings. I am sure of each of them to the recognised criminal standard. Where necessary, I provide a summary of my reasoning.

#### ***Aggravating factors***

##### *Public place*

16. This was an offence in public, in a residential street near to the railway station. The offender committed it in front of the victim’s friends. It was a shocking incident. It deeply shocked the victim’s friends, one of whom can be heard screaming. Members of the public quickly attended and witnessed the distressing scene of Mr Algasim’s bleeding to death on a public street. I regard the public use of the knife at this location as an aggravating factor.

##### *The knife and trauma*

17. The knife was a kitchen knife with a blade that is 13 cm in length. It penetrated the victim’s neck to a depth of 11.5 cm, that is, 88 per cent of its length. It stopped on reaching the deceased’s jawbone.

18. There is no doubt that the defendant took the knife to the scene. He removed it from the flat of his friend Simona without her permission or knowledge. He did not take it to commit this offence for para 4(2)(a) purposes. He had had confrontations with other men around the Cambridge area. He told the report writer that he had the knife with him “for scare tactics”. By his plea of guilty to the bladed article offence under section 139, he accepts he did not have good reason or lawful authority to have it with him. I am sure he had the knife with him to have it available to use as a weapon for para 4(2)(b) purposes. That is exactly how he used it in the offence.

19. The aggravating effect of the knife is subsumed within the 25-year starting-point. The aggravating effect is reflected in the increase from a 15-year to 25-year starting-point.
20. I am prepared to accept that the defendant had the weapon with him in part because of the trauma of previous attacks and his personal history and not because he was going out to seek or provoke violence. However, he had it in reserve and that it a substantial part of the gravity of his offending. The PSR report writer Jake Coe addresses this at page 3 and states:

“Mr Corrigan's decision to routinely carry a knife, despite acknowledging previous victimisation, is an aggravating behaviour indicating a concerning coping strategy and increasing the likelihood of future serious harm in similar contexts if unaddressed.”
21. Indeed, Mr Coe includes in the drivers of the offence the defendant’s “high-risk decision to carry a knife routinely.” I regard the trauma background to his decision to routinely arm himself with a knife in public to be a limited mitigating factor. It constituted as Mr Coe correctly states at page 7 a “high-risk thinking pattern that directly contributed to the offence.”
22. Instead of avoiding unsafe areas, the defendant chose to frequent them and arm himself with a lethal weapon in case of need. During the evening of 1 August 2025, he approached two different groups of young people in the street. All the time he had the 8-inch knife concealed within his clothing, ready for use should he need it. The report writer states at page 2, “His stated fear response is consistent with his reported experiences of past victimisation and exposure to violence, although these factors do not reduce the seriousness of his decision-making.”
23. In truth, the trauma provides an explanation for his having the knife, and some but not substantial mitigation. It was a dangerous and unlawful strategy that led to the death of an innocent member of the public. At two points in the incident, the defendant could have walked away without any risk to his personal safety. Instead, he chose to return and confront the group of young people by the stoop to the student flats. Within a minute took out a large knife and stabbed one of them in the neck with no justification whatsoever.
24. The report writer did not attend the trial. I viewed the footage with the jury dozens of times and heard the offender’s testimony on oath. The report writer repeats what the defendant tells him that he misinterpreted the actions and movements of Mr Algasim. I reject that account. I am sure to the criminal standard that instead Chas Corrigan was walking away from the group and towards Cambridge railway station. One member of the group shouted something at him. The defendant turned immediately and lowered his face very close to the victim’s in a threatening manner, deliberately and threateningly invading his personal space. When Mr Algasim stood up, he had a phone in hand and nothing else. His movements were not threatening. It is not known what if anything was said between the two young men. That is when the defendant chose to take out the knife and stab Mr Algasim in the neck.

25. I am sure that this was not a misreading of movements. It was driven by drug- and alcohol-fuelled anger. This finding is supported by the offender's immediate conduct towards the other people present, to which I turn.

#### *Threats to others*

26. **Mr Bin Shuail.** The prosecution submits that after stabbing the victim, the defendant made threats to one of the witnesses, Mr Bin Shuail. Certainly, Mr Bin Shuail said that he felt threatened and withdrew towards the door of the flats. But that is not the same as the defendant seeking to threaten Mr Bin Shuail. I am not sure that was his intention. Therefore, I cannot hold that conduct against the defendant.

27. At trial, Mr Bin Shuail said that the defendant said words to him similar to "What are you going to do?" It was this that Mr Bin Shuail felt threatened by. This conduct was deeply unpleasant, but it seems to me to be part and parcel of the offender's bravado and his aggressive state of mind. It was not threatening further violence.

28. **The young women.** The offensive nature of the defendant's conduct is confirmed by his behaviour towards the two young women present. The offender certainly shouted towards at least one of the women. Once more I am not sure he made a threat of violence. It sounds very much on the audio that he shouted at the young woman that she is a "prostitute". Once more, this is odious conduct. But I am not persuaded that he was threatening violence. Therefore, I do not aggravate this very serious offence further for these two acts of abhorrent conduct.

29. However, this behaviour by the defendant provides clear confirmation of the aggressive state of mind. I am sure that he did not feel himself under threat from Mr Algasim. He could have walked away, even when the two men were face to face. Instead, he was angry. Whether he felt himself slighted or disrespected after the words shouted in his direction, his response was to use extreme and unjustified violence with fatal consequences.

#### *Intoxication*

30. As the report writer puts it, he there was "heavy alcohol consumption and cocaine use throughout the evening". That is a fair summary. The defendant told Mr Coe (page 6) that he had become "complacent" with his habitual use of cocaine. This case reveals the catastrophic consequences of such complacency with Class A drugs. I agree with the report writer that his cocaine use poses a "clear criminogenic risk".

31. I find his intoxication an aggravating factor.

#### *Efforts to conceal evidence*

32. The defendant attempted to dispose of the knife and the hid the distinctive "high-vis" jacket he had worn during the incident. Then he enlisted his father's assistance to dispose of the jacket. I must also sentence his father for the offence of assisting an offender. His father has been in custody awaiting sentence for many months as a result of his son's conduct.

#### ***Mitigating factors***

##### *Intention*

33. I turn to the question of the defendant's intent. The prosecution does not invite the court to find that there was an intent to kill. I have in any event concluded that such a finding would not be justified on the evidence.

34. In *R v Peters* [2005] EWCA Crim 605, Lord Judge, then Deputy Chief Justice, said a paras 14 and 16 about Schedule 21:

“14. ... para.11(a) underlines that such an intention to cause grievous bodily harm, as opposed to an intention to kill, “may” provide relevant mitigation, but not necessarily, and not always...

16. We have sufficiently demonstrated that it cannot be assumed that the absence of an intention to kill necessarily provides any or very much mitigation. It does not automatically do so. That said, in many cases, particularly in cases where the violence resulting in death has erupted suddenly and unexpectedly, it will probably do so, and it is more likely to do so, and the level of mitigation may be greater, if the injuries causing death were not inflicted with a weapon.”

35. Although a knife was used to inflict the fatal injury, I am satisfied that this was a sudden, unexpected and spur of the moment incident. The defendant was walking away from the group on the stoop and turned back. The knife wound was inflicted in around 45 seconds. I judge that there should be a measure of mitigation from the lack of intent to kill. However, it is limited. It is limited because there was the use of a weapon and the stab to the neck was an obviously highly dangerous act.

#### *Premeditation*

36. Equally, and as an extension to this point, there was a lack of premeditation here. This provides the offender with some mitigation, but again it is limited.

#### *Remorse*

37. The PSR states on page 2 that the defendant expresses remorse for his actions. However, he chose to contest the trial in the face of very clear video footage showing his violent and deliberate use of the knife. He still maintains that he was unaware that the knife made contact with his victim. I cannot accept this. The knife penetrated Mr Algasim’s neck almost the whole way through until it made contact and scored the jawbone on the other side. I reject his account.

38. The offender claims to the report writer that he had no malice. I find that his actions, albeit on the spur of the moment, were violent and deliberately and unnecessarily aggressive. This was the quality of his offensive conduct towards Mr Algasim’s friends immediately after he had stabbed the victim in the neck. The defendant’s continuing equivocation is confirmed by the letter he wrote while in custody. His counsel said it was not so much for the court as for the bereaved family. I have grave doubts whether it offers any comfort or consolation. The offender repeats elements of his defence that were rejected by the jury. He states that the incident happened in “a blink of an eye” and “[I] truly thought I was going to get seriously injured.” He adds that his reaction was “to swing a weapon so close to someone in order to frighten them”. Thus, he maintains his claims that this was an accident caused when he spontaneously reacted when he thought he was about to get seriously hurt. Like the jury, I reject this account.

39. I find that the remorse he purports to express and the responsibility he says he accepts in fact ring hollow in light of his continuing falsehoods about his conduct and failure to accept the facts that any reasonable and rational person can see from the video footage of the murder. Ultimately, it is not remorse if he does not accept what has been proved beyond reasonable doubt.

#### *Employment*

40. The offender has worked regularly since leaving school without qualifications, and his efforts to stay gainfully employed count in his favour. Indeed, he was working on the day of the murder. However, the stability offered by employment, along with his being in a stable relationship, provided no meaningful protective factor against his carrying dangerous weapons, taking Class A drugs or acting with extreme violence. As the report writer says, these protective factors were established by the time of the offence, but did not act to restrain his violent conduct. Thus, his employment history provides him with some but limited mitigation.

#### *Age*

41. I regard the defendant's age as the most powerful mitigating factor. He was 21 at the time of the offending. I judge it appropriate to reduce his sentence due to the fact of his biological age.

#### *Immaturity*

42. As to immaturity, there is a growing research base about incomplete brain development before the age of 25, particularly in males. This, however, is a general scientific observation about the wider population. In this case, there is no clinical, medical or psychological evidence to indicate cognitive difficulties or organic reasons for immaturity. On page 3 of the PSR is the observation that "his emotional maturity, particularly under the influence of substances may have been limited". But there is no testing; no assessed adjusted emotional or developmental age; and no clear indication of functioning age when not intoxicated. To the extent that his emotional maturity is affected as a result of self-intoxication, it provides limited mitigation.

43. I find that the isolated comment about immaturity in the PSR does not greatly assist. One must be cautious about assuming that an adult defendant beyond the age of 21 is immature simply because of biological age. Some younger males are immature, others are not. There is here no clear independent evidence to confirm that this defendant has developmental or emotional immaturity. Yet he has had many difficulties in his life, including an unstable home, exposure to domestic abuse and violence, and having been a victim of sexual misconduct by an adult female connected to the school when he was a teenager. She was not prosecuted.

44. The difficulty in this case is that there is no expert evidence to support this factor. It was open to the defence to seek expert assistance and it laid any before the court. However, having reviewed all the available evidence carefully, I am prepared to proceed on the basis that all these matters have impacted his coping mechanisms, and his use of alcohol and drugs is part of this deeply dysfunctional picture that has been coloured by his childhood trauma. As his counsel puts it, I judge accurately, the connection is not to the offence directly, but to his use of drugs and alcohol to cope. Counsel is correct also not to overreach

and submits that immaturity is not relied on “to a huge extent”. I agree. It is a limited mitigating factor, but mitigation nonetheless.

#### *Antecedents and character evidence*

45. The defendant had no previous convictions prior to this incident. But he did take a knife with him in public which was a criminal offence before he encountered Mr Algasim. He was routinely carrying a knife in an unlawful and dangerous way.
46. I have considered his character references. From his brother, his fiancée, and some of his friends. Mr Abdulla’s statement was read to the jury during the trial. It has limited use as it characterised the defendant as a person who would not use violence. Yet the jury found, unanimously convicting him of murder within an hour, that he used extreme violence. Ms Morgan is his fiancée. She speaks to the positive side to his character and how he supported her when she had a serious injury following a car accident. His friend Christopher Marshall-Macintosh speaks positively also about his experience of his friend’s kindness and consideration. His friend Neaton O’Dwyer speaks in equally positive terms. His brother John writes that his brother is loyal and well-liked.
47. I must add that the defendant has used his time in custody productively. That is to his credit. I can agree he has used the time in custody to try to “better himself”, as counsel succinctly puts it.
48. However, as the guidelines repeatedly state, personal mitigation is likely to be of limited value when the offending is very serious. Here I have found that the seriousness is high.

#### **Sentence calculation**

49. It is agreed between the prosecution and defence that the starting-point is a minimum term of 25 years’ custody. This due to bringing of the knife to the scene, having it available for use, and then using it. I do not increase the sentence further for the bladed article offence to avoid double counting. I will deal with the appropriate concurrent sentence for that offence shortly.

#### **Relevant factors**

50. I now list the factors for and against I have found in this case.

##### *Aggravating factors*

- Intoxication;
- Public offending;
- Concealing evidence.

##### *Mitigating factors*

- No intention to kill;
- Lack of premeditation;
- Age;
- Some element of immaturity and trauma-related coping mechanisms;
- Lack of previous convictions;
- Employment history;
- Positive conduct in custody.

51. I judge that the mitigating factors outweigh the aggravating factors. While I regard the aggravating factors as requiring a significant upward adjustment, there is substantial mitigation, and in particular from the defendant's age and the element of immaturity and history of trauma. Therefore, I reduce the minimum term by from 25 to 22 years and 6 months' custody.

### **Remand time**

52. From this figure, the days spent on remand can be deducted in the discretion of the court. I have regard to the recent judgment of the Court of Appeal in *R v Nwankwo* [2024] EWCA Crim 1375 in which William Davis LJ explained that the discretion will be exercised in favour of the offender "unless unusual circumstances" pertain. They do not pertain here. Therefore, the remand days must be deducted from the minimum term. The agreed remand figure as of date of sentence imposition is 305 days. Any necessary adjustment if subsequent calculation results in a different figure can be made administratively.

### **Surcharge**

53. A victim surcharge of £228 applies in sentences of life imprisonment (Sentencing Act 2020 (Surcharge) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, regulation 2).

### **Bladed article**

54. I deal more briefly with the section 139 offence. I have considered the relevant guideline for this offence. It is culpability Category A and harm Band 1. Therefore, the starting-point is 18 months' with a range of 12 months' to 30 months' custody. I judge this to be a serious offence. I must take into account totality and therefore I judge that the sentence should be 28 months' custody. This must be reduced because of mitigating factors and early guilty plea, which itself merits a 25 per cent reduction. I judge the appropriate sentence to be 18 months' custody. It is to be served concurrently to the murder sentence.

### **Effect of sentence**

55. Chas Corrigan, I impose a life sentence on you in accordance with the law. I also impose a minimum term of 22 years' 6 months custody less the 305 days you have spent on remand. Therefore, the adjusted resultant figure is a minimum term of 21 years and 240 days' custody. The sentence for having a blade article will be 18 months' custody to run concurrently. This means you will not be eligible to be considered for release by the Parole Board before the minimum term is served.

### **Mohammed Algasim**

56. I cannot end this hearing without returning to the victim in this case. I have read again the VPSs of the Mr Algasim's father and sister. His sister describes her brother as a source of emotional support, reassurance, and happiness to her and also the whole family. She describes his positive character, his commitment to self-improvement, and his close friendships with people of all ages. She suffers ongoing trauma from having viewed the footage of her brother's murder. She cannot comprehend the senseless brutality of Chas Corrigan's actions.

57. Mr Algasim's father suffers from life-changing grief and psychological trauma. He details severe and ongoing impact across the family, particularly affecting Mohammed's mother, siblings, and elderly relatives. The grief of living without her son in the home has been catastrophic to his mother. Mr Algasim senior stresses that Mohammed's death represents not only the loss of a beloved son, but the destruction of a promising future and a profound

breach of trust placed in the opportunity to study abroad. Mr Algasim was a guest in our country. He loved the UK and especially London deeply and hoped to have a career as an engineer. He was a pillar of his family and engaged in charity work for those in need. They are a peaceful family with no history of criminal involvement or connection with the criminal justice system. Life now without Mohammed is no longer the same.

58. Chas Corrigan, I agree with the report writer's assessment at page 9 that you pose a high risk of serious harm to the public. Whether that risk ever reduces is a matter for the Parole Board many years in the future. You will remain in prison for life unless and until the Parole Board determines it is safe for the public for you to be released on licence. That licence will last for the rest of your life. If you reoffend or breach any of the licence conditions after release, you may be recalled to prison to serve the rest of your life sentence.
59. Perhaps no one will ever understand why you did what you have done. It was literally senseless. It made no sense. You were fuelled by alcohol and cocaine and anger. It is a lethal combination and proved to be fatal.
60. Mr Algasim was an entirely innocent member of the public. He had most of his promising life ahead of him. You robbed him of that. You have robbed his family of him. As Mr Algasim's sister Shatha puts it, "no words can adequately describe our pain since the news of Mohammed's death". That is the sentence they will now live with because of your violence.