

**HIS HONOUR JUDGE WILLIAM MOUSLEY K.C.**

**HONORARY RECORDER OF SOUTHAMPTON AND RESIDENT JUDGE**

**THE KING -v- VICKRUM SINGH DIGWA**

**SENTENCING REMARKS 1/6/2026**

1. Stand up, please. Henry Nowak, aged 18, died on 3/12/2025. He was a much-loved, kind, hard-working and ambitious young man, devoted to his family and with a bright future. He was a first-year student at Southampton University, the first in his family to go to university. He was careful and principled, full of humour, warmth and promise.
2. You, Vickrum Digwa, murdered him. By doing so, you robbed him of all those he loved, all the things he cared about and liked to do. He would have been expected to live a long, hopefully, happy and fulfilling life. You have brought misery and a lifetime of loss upon his family and great sadness to everyone who knew him.
3. You are 23; in December 2025 you were 22 and had no previous convictions. You may sit down, for now.
4. Mark Nowak, Henry's father, has described the devastating and lifelong impact of Henry's death on him and the whole family. He speaks of the horror of losing his son in such violent circumstances, the trauma of identifying his body, and the lasting torment of imagining Henry's final moments. He describes overwhelming grief, guilt, helplessness, and the pain of seeing Henry's mother, siblings, and wider family broken by the loss. Mr Nowak says that the family has effectively been given "a life sentence," with the pain

affecting every aspect of their lives and every significant family occasion, and that nothing will ever fill the permanent void left by Henry's death.

5. Lucy Ross, Henry's mother, has described the profound and enduring impact of his death upon the whole family. She recalls the devastating moment she was told of his death and the anguish of having to tell Henry's elderly grandparents. She describes the continuing grief suffered by the family, including Henry's sister Olivia, who has lost not only her brother but her best friend, and says that the profound and lasting effect of this loss is something they will carry for the rest of their lives.
  
6. Olivia Nowak, the sister of Henry describes a relationship of exceptional closeness, in which her brother was not only a sibling but her closest companion and a central part of her daily life. His death has, in her words, caused her world to "fall apart". She recounts the profound shock and trauma of being informed of her brother's death, and the continuing anguish associated with identifying him, attending his funeral, and confronting the many "firsts" without him—his birthday, Christmas, and other significant family occasions.. The impact upon her own life has been profound and enduring. Her home, once a place of comfort, is now a constant reminder of his absence. She describes the effect on her ability to work, due to persistent grief and intrusive thoughts about the circumstances of his death. She also carries an additional emotional burden as the eldest sibling, striving to support her younger brothers and sisters through their grief while recognising that she is powerless to remove their pain. This compounds her own suffering. The loss, she makes clear, is lifelong. Her life has been permanently changed by the death of her brother, and the emotional consequences remain acute and far-reaching.
  
7. David Stevenson, step-father, describes the devastating impact of Henry's death upon him and the wider family. He explains that Henry was his much-loved stepson, with whom he had a close and affectionate relationship, and

speaks of the shock of learning that Henry had been murdered and the lasting grief, sadness and anger that have followed. He also explains that the consequences have affected every aspect of his own life, including the loss of his employment, and says that the family will carry this pain permanently.

8. Katie Woodcock, stepmother, describes the devastating and far-reaching impact of Henry's death upon her, her husband, and the younger children in the family. She recounts the trauma of being told by police in the early hours that Henry had been stabbed and killed, and the lasting effect of that night upon her. She explains that the loss has caused profound emotional harm to Henry's younger siblings, including fear, anxiety, sleep disturbance, difficulties at school, and an enduring sense of insecurity. She also describes the strain upon family life, her own grief, fear and inability to concentrate, and the pain of missing Henry in the ordinary moments of daily life. She says that the family continue to live with the permanent consequences of his death.
9. Not long after 11pm on 3/12/2025, Henry Nowak was walking back to his university accommodation in Portswood, Southampton after an evening out. His route took him north along Belmont Road and he was approaching a junction with St Denys Road where you lived with your family. Henry was not drunk but may have been affected a little by the small amount of alcohol he had consumed over the previous few hours. He was not a regular drinker and did not generally drink to excess. His blood alcohol level at the time of his death was below the legal limit for driving. He was alone and unarmed. You happened to be walking south along Belmont Road on the same pavement. It was to be a chance meeting.
10. You were sober but were carrying a large Sikh dagger in a sheath attached to a belt over the outside of your clothing. It is a strict requirement of the Sikh faith to have a knife, called a kirpan, at all times. Generally, this will be a small knife, hidden from view, often on a length of cord and worn around the neck. You had that but, in addition, the large dagger in a sheath. You are a member of an order of Sikhs called the Nihang who have a tradition of having a second

knife, or kirpan and that is often fully visible, believing that the guru will look favourably on that. You observed that tradition in your everyday life, at work and in public. However, it was not a strict requirement; that is borne out by the fact that neither your brother nor father who arrived on the scene after you had stabbed Henry were so dressed. According to Professor Gurnam Singh, Professor of Sociology and an expert in the field: “Over the last 30 years, there has been a trend towards younger people wearing a kirpan with pride, in a desire to express their cultural identity. They see it as an act of resistance to being denied the ability otherwise to display their identity.”

11. The privilege extended to practising Sikhs of being allowed to be in public with a bladed article and, particularly in respect of the large dagger, a highly dangerous weapon, easily accessible to the wearer, brings with it huge responsibility.
  
12. It is a fundamental principle of Sikhism that any kirpan is worn as a symbol of religious faith and is never to be carried for an offensive purpose. The legal approach to the carrying of such a knife, as long as the blade length does not exceed 9 inches, is that an offence of Having a Bladed Article in a public place will not be prosecuted; there has been an acceptance that its possession in those circumstances, can amount to a good religious and, therefore, legal reason for having it. The blade of the knife will not be on display; either it is under clothing or, alternatively, in a sheath. For both, it is a religious and, consequently, legal requirement that a kirpan should only be used offensively as a last resort, which would include its use in legal self-defence. In other words, only if use is necessary and, if so, reasonable in the circumstances. It is obvious that for use to be reasonable, any perceived threat justifying its use would only be in circumstances of great seriousness and urgency.
  
13. In Belmont Road, you and Henry passed each other. You claimed he deliberately barged into you. I am sure that was one of the many lies you have told and repeated since it happened. However, there was an interaction between you both. Henry, perhaps cheekily, made a comment, asking if you were a “bad

man.” He was filming you on his phone when he said it. The tone of his voice was not aggressive or threatening but, as it turned out, a tragic error of judgment. It is a reasonable conclusion that the comment was because he had seen the large, sheathed dagger. That would have been a very unusual thing for an 18-year-old student and non-Sikh to see.

14. You moved towards him and, confidently, told him that you were “a bad man.” This was the response, I believe, of someone who thought they were being disrespected, made worse by the perceived intrusion of being filmed. You were not frightened or concerned and grabbed his phone, removing it from him. The exact events which immediately followed were only witnessed by Henry and you. However, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that Henry would have wanted his phone back, believing it had been stolen from him or that he had been robbed. That may have led to a physical struggle between you and him. In that situation, there was every need for self-restraint and control on your part. As someone who was born and raised in the UK, that should have been your focus rather than any distorted view of your religious traditions. Strong words, even a verbal threat, might have been justified but no more.
  
15. It would also seem that your turban may have been knocked, pulled or, potentially, punched off your head. The wearing of a turban, at all times, is another fundamental religious requirement of being a male Sikh. The removal of it by another would be considered a serious act and a further mark of disrespect. It is a reasonable conclusion that this would only have added to your anger.
  
16. You drew the dagger from its sheath and, as the jury was sure, you deliberately stabbed Henry in the chest with it. The knife passed through, several layers of clothing, as demonstrated by the multiple slits in his dark top where the material had been overlaid on itself in the struggle and the single slit in his shirt. It passed upwards through soft tissue, between the two uppermost ribs, catching a lung and cutting an important vein, behind the collar bone. This was to a depth of 8cm from the skin surface. The consequent bleeding flowed into his chest cavity.

The pathologist, Amanda Jeffrey, found 1200 ml, or over 2 pints, of blood there. She said that no emergency medical treatment would have permitted access to the bleeding vein. In simple terms, he would not have survived, however quickly he received first aid, CPR or expert medical treatment.

17. You also stabbed him twice to the upper leg at some point and once again to the lower abdomen/groin area at the front. The latter only resulted in a knife tip injury; the former were both to a substantial depth although not as deep as the chest wound. Henry's face was also slashed with the blade of the dagger but I cannot be sure that was aimed or intended. However, one or more of the four stabs must have had an immediate effect as Henry was never able to put up his hands to defend himself from further serious injury. He was defenceless.
18. You, by contrast, had little, if any, injury. You told the attending police that you had a small bruise and swelling to your eye from a punch but it is not obvious on body-worn footage taken then and there has been no independent evidence given in the trial of any injury at all to you.
19. Your brother, Gurpreet, arrived on the scene very shortly after your attack had finished. You then filmed Henry desperately trying to get away from you, somehow scaling a fence, onto a communal bin, before landing on a car in front of the property next door. Bloodstains show that he had got one, more or all his injuries before then.
20. You then showed a callous disregard for his wellbeing, knowing you had stabbed him to the chest. You continued to make films of Henry suffering, ignoring much of his desperation at having been stabbed. You told him that had not happened, no doubt to convince others who were nearby. Your attitude did not change even though Henry was clearly going downhill very fast. Your brother did much the same, although he may just have been accepting that which you had told him, rather than lying himself. You lied to him that you had been attacked, picking up on his question about whether it had been accompanied by racism by falsely claiming that Henry had called you a "Paki." I am sure that Henry had said

nothing racist. You are the only person to make that claim and it is completely at odds with his previous character.

21. You joined your brother in relating these lies to the police. By then your mother and father were at the scene. Gurpreet explained that no weapons had been involved or were present. In fact, whilst he was talking to the call operator, you told your mother to take the murder weapon, sheath and belt away which she did. You did not tell your father what had really happened. Much of the time you just stood by as he, at least, tried to do something to help Henry.
22. You carried on telling these wicked lies when police attended on the scene, hampering them in doing their job and, effectively, obstructing the course of justice. You kept Henry's phone with the incriminating recording of you on it. You had no intention of handing it over. It was found on you after you had been arrested and taken into police custody.
23. Thereafter, the time came when the police needed permission from a court to extend the time for you to be questioned in custody and arranged for you and Gurpreet to be taken there for that purpose. They took the opportunity to record secretly any conversation between the two of you on the journey. Speaking in Punjabi, you agreed to pretend you had acted in self-defence even though you confessed to stabbing Henry three times, including once to the chest with the dagger. You knew you were guilty, demonstrated by your saying to Gurpreet that if there were any cameras in that part of Belmont Road, you would be unable to put forward self-defence. You decided, much as you had at the scene, to try to cover it up. In all your police interviews, you decided not to answer questions about the incident. Instead, you made a written statement, on 7/12/2025, which told more lies.
24. Once the criminal proceedings were underway, you made another statement, developing and modifying those lies. It was only when you gave evidence in court, that you put forward your full defence. The jury entirely rejected that defence and I do too.

25. In addition to killing Henry and the irreparable harm to those close to him, you have also caused real suffering to others who knew him. You have brought shame upon your family, your community and your religion. Your actions have stirred up racial tension in Southampton and across the country which have made many Sikhs worried about their own safety even though they have done absolutely nothing wrong.
26. You bear some responsibility for the offence committed by your mother when you asked her to take the murder weapon away from you after she arrived on the scene. Your lies to the police about what had happened led, in part, to the arrests of your father, brother and mother for murder and their being taken into police custody. Your mother has remained in custody for the past seven months.
27. Another consequence of those lies is that the attending police officers honestly believed that there were reasonable grounds for suspecting Henry had committed an offence and arrested him with the consequence he was handcuffed for about a minute before his condition further deteriorated and the arresting officer began CPR. The police were given a convincing but wholly false narrative of the incident. It was dark and Henry was wearing a dark top. The entry damage caused by the knife through it, would not have been obvious. Whilst there was visible blood on Henry, it would not have clearly been seen coming from that wound and the clearly visible facial wound was not life-threatening. Henry was complaining that he had been stabbed and was struggling to breathe but that would not have necessarily told the officers how serious the situation had become. It is the experience of the criminal courts that sometimes, someone arrested and handcuffed will feign injury in the hope they may be released. These police officers were faced with having to make quick decisions in pressurised circumstances about the best way to act. The genuine shock to the particular police officer, when he realised that he had been giving CPR to Henry when he had a serious chest wound tends to show that he was doing his best in a very difficult situation.

28. You were still present at the scene when Henry was saying he was dying and still you did not tell the truth about how seriously you knew you had hurt him and the need for urgency. Instead, you said he had not been stabbed and that he was exaggerating.
29. The sentence for murder is life imprisonment. You will remain in prison for life unless the Parole Board decides that it is safe for you to be released on a life licence. I must specify a minimum period to be served before the Parole Board may first consider earlier release. If you are released you will be on licence for the rest of your life and subject to recall to serve the rest of the life sentence, if a time does not come when the Parole Board is satisfied it is safe to release you again. You would be liable to such recall if you committed any other offence or just broke any licence conditions.
30. I have to apply Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020 to identify the starting point for that minimum period. In this case, that gives a minimum term is 15 years. The murder did not involve taking a knife to the scene with the purpose to use it to commit an offence or to have it available to do so. It is possible that you had a good legal reason for having the dagger when you met Henry although, considering the jury's verdict, that reason must have come to an end after you removed it from its sheath. Neither was it a murder for gain; whilst you did take his phone, or even rob him of it, that was neither the purpose of the murder nor clearly a part of it but I am sure it was a further trigger for what happened to Henry.
31. There are a number of aggravating factors to increase the starting point. In no particular order, they are as follows, Firstly, you stabbed Henry three other times than when inflicting the fatal wound, all with a highly dangerous weapon. Secondly, mental suffering was inflicted on Henry once he lay dying from his injuries, by your attitude towards him of which he would have been aware and, separately, by your lies which had resulted in a young adult of good character being arrested and handcuffed. Thirdly, there was additional degradation by filming his suffering. Fourth, your repeated and concerted actions after the

event included attempts to cover up and to conceal evidence had a tendency to pervert the course of justice. Fifth, you wrongly placed blame on Henry and your lies also led to unnecessary arrests for members of your family which would not have happened if you had told the truth. Sixth, you prevailed upon your mother to assist your attempts to pervert the course of justice. Seventh, Henry was only 18, unarmed and alone which made him additionally vulnerable. Eighth, the offence has had a significant community impact upon others as described and evidenced in press reporting and social media reaction. Ninth, your lies misled the attending police officers which influenced their decision not only to arrest and handcuff Henry but also to give subsequent emergency first aid in ignorance of the fact that he had a serious chest wound. Lastly, you abused the privilege extended to Sikhs to have a knife in a public place for religious reasons, dishonoured your religion and have now put others at risk of repercussions . Those factors increase the minimum term to 23 years. A number of these would not have applied if you had told the police what you said to your brother in the police van on 5/12/2025.

32. The mitigating factors reduce that minimum period to 21 years. They are your age, your previous good record, with no previous convictions, and a lack of premeditation. There are no others. I am sure that you intended to kill in the moments before you stabbed Henry.
33. I must also deduct the period that you have already spent in custody since first appearing in court after charge on 8/12/2025. I calculate that to be 175 days before today.
34. Stand up, Vickrum Digwa. The sentence on Count 1 is Life Imprisonment with a minimum term of 20 years and 190 days before there can be any consideration given to whether you can be safely released before the end of your life. On Count 2 the sentence is 2 years imprisonment concurrent to Count 1.
35. If there is a surcharge payable, the order will be drawn up in the appropriate amount.