



PJ01Bi Sentencing Remarks Benjamin Wazabanga

14th July 2026

In the Central Criminal Court
Old Bailey
London

R v Benjamin Wazabanga
Sentencing Remarks

His Honour Judge Martyn Levett DL.

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1. Sentencing Remarks

1.1 Benjamin Wazabanga, the jury found you guilty of murdering Ayo Aladejana after a trial lasting several weeks. On 2nd August 2025, you and Ms Belfon drove for 2 hours from Bedford to Monson Road in New Cross, South London with your two children aged 1 and 2 years old in the rear of the car. Although you said the arrangements and purpose of the journey might have changed early on during the drive, one thing is perfectly clear: before you set off on the journey and after you played football in the afternoon, Ms Belfon drove you back to your flat where you deliberately fetched the Combat knife. You kept it in your possession throughout the journey right up to the minute when you walked to the scene of the killing in Monson Road, outside Mr Aladejana's house at number 34.

1.2 I am quite sure that by taking the Combat knife to the scene of the killing, you intended have it available for use in committing the murder. The worrying aspect in this case is that you told the jury that since 2018, you habitually carried a knife when you went out on the streets in Bedford but I could not detect any legitimate reason at all for you to carrying the knife in the car for 2 hours when young children were present, nor when going to the front door to speak to Mr Aladejana with it concealed in your pocket, unless your plan was use it as a weapon to reinforce demands for money owed and to use it as weapon if the need arose. You may not have intended to kill Mr Aladejana but I am sure you intended to use the Combat knife to cause the deceased really serious harm from which he died at the scene.

1.3 During the trial and in your evidence, you maintained you acted in self-defence, but the jury rejected that answer. Mr Wazabanga you were 23 yrs old at the time, you were dressed in black jogging trousers over your blue football shorts shown in Photo TAB9 and inside your right pocket you kept the black handled Combat knife exhibit TTT/02 which had a 4-inch blade, and overall length of over 8 inches.

1.4 The sentence for murder is prescribed by law. It is called a mandatory sentence and is a life sentence which requires me to fix the minimum term, which is the minimum time which must pass before you will be eligible for consideration for release by the Parole Board, but I emphasise, you will not be released until it considers that it is safe to do so.

1.5 In fixing that minimum term I am required to consider the seriousness of the offence, and in a moment, I will explain how I have arrived at that period having followed the general principles in Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act and any other relevant Sentencing guidelines for this and other offences which fall to be sentenced. With that in mind, I have also to pass a sentence for possession of that bladed Combat knife after you pleaded guilty. The context of you carrying that knife was against a background of highly relevant previous convictions and a series of suspended sentences imposed despite you habitually carrying a bladed article when you went out on the streets of Bedford since 2018 after an incident when you said you had been stabbed.

1.7 I did not require any PSR for the assessment of the seriousness of the offending nor in determining whether you are a dangerous offender because those factors are taken into account in the minimum term provisions. I have the advantage of reading a very long letter from your mother at T6. She gives considerable amount of background detail about herself and the deep feelings of regret she had not given sufficient attention to you over the latter years but for which things may have turned out differently. I have also read the courteous letter send to me by your brother at T47 and by you uploaded at T48 in which you explain that football, you job doing warehouse work and music are important features of your life. I am quite sure that the time you spend in custody will be used to reflect and help others. Those activities should provide structure, purpose and a sense of belonging, occupying time that might otherwise be spent in anti-social or criminal activity and as you acknowledge they promote discipline, teamwork, respect for rules and positive peer relationships. If only you had lived by those categorical imperatives of life things may well have turned out differently.

1.8 However, nothing escapes the period from 2019 during which you committed several relevant offences and had a series of suspended sentence orders imposed, each providing considerable support from the various agencies, designed to assist you in troubled times. I have read the letter from Sonita Drydon at T37 and ruth Williams at T45 both were students with you at Notting Hill Academy of Music on the commercial songwriting course in 2024, and the Award certificate for customer care dated 4/1/24 at T7 – 12. I should point out that none of the authors of those testimonials appear to know about your significant previous convictions, or the habitual carrying of a knife, which I assumed was also carried when on educational premises.

1.9 I must also consider the minimum sentence to be imposed on count 2 for possession of a bladed article on 2/8/25 because this will be your third conviction for possessing a bladed article. This Combat knife was the one used to kill Mr Aladejana. You pleaded guilty to that offence at PTPH on 29/10/25 and will receive a 25% reduction from the sentence. The Sentencing Council guideline for a bladed article in category 1A is between 18 months starting point in a range up to 30 months. Had there been a trial on that charge the sentence on conviction would have been 24 months imprisonment which is therefore reduced to 18 months. There are no exceptional circumstances which relate either to the offence or to you to justify a departure from the immediate sentence which is longer than the statutory minimum sentence under section 315(3).

1.10. More significantly, I am also required to set the minimum term sentence to be imposed for murder having regard to the provisions of schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act, particularly paragraph 4(2), which considers murder to be sufficiently serious for the starting point for the minimum term to be 25 years. One further point is that the murder was committed during the operational period of a suspended sentence of 19 months imposed on 31/8/23 for 2 years.

You have admitted being in breach of that suspended sentence order. I now turn to the background against which this killing occurred.

2. Background

2.1 In these sentencing remarks, where I make findings of fact, I am satisfied so that I am sure of them having regard to the evidence before the Court during the trial. One feature of this case is that much background can be gleaned from the phone messages passing between you, Ms Belfon, other third parties and the deceased's partner Katelyn Edwards. She as you knew was pregnant with her first child at the time leading up to the fatal incident causing Mr Aladejana's death. In the immediate minutes before the fatal stabbing, several cctv clips and doorbell footage captured the precursor to the stabbing. The audio from the door camera system sheds light on what was said and shows the immediate aftermath.

2.2 In the statement read to the jury, Katelyn Edwards said that Mr Aladejana had an arrangement with others for his car rental business to use vehicles leased on finance by others, and in return, he would pay those persons an income from his profits. It was an arrangement in breach of the lease agreements with finance companies and there were about 5-6 third parties who were vulnerable to the same arrangement. One of those was Ronique Belfon, your partner at the time, and additionally you had lent Mr Aladejana £3,000 for car repairs. Both of you expected a regular monthly payment in return for the money and cars lent to him.

2.3 As it emerged during the trial, Mr Aladejana became more elusive after making only one monthly payment of income to Ms Belfon and you had received nothing. By 3/5/25 the tone of the phone traffic showed you and Ms Belfon were getting more agitated and to some, more menacing, because parking tickets received by hirers were not being paid, speeding tickets generated requests for driver details under section 174 Road Traffic Laws could not be completed due to lack of knowing who they were, the two cars leased by Ms Belfon were impounded and had to be released and more recently the insurance company began to show interest into the possible use of cars not in accordance with the personal policies taken out.

2.4 As a result of not receiving any income, Ms Belfon was accruing large debts, and instalments due to the Finance Lease company were not paid resulting in threats to repossess the cars if payments were not made. You had contacted Katelyn Edwards direct because you were getting nowhere in trying to track down Mr Aladejana's whereabouts, lies were being told and I am sure the level of frustration was increasing to a point where I am sure that the journey on 2/8/25 was all about the lengths you were prepared to go to in confronting Mr Aladejana about money or the location of cars so as to rectify yours and Ms Belfon's financial hardship.

2.5 The recurring question in my mind has been why deliberately fetch that Combat knife from your flat if the purpose of the journey to London was to

visit Ms Belfon's Aunt Bola for a festival weekend or just to have a chat with Mr Aladejana about the lack of payment received. This was not just a family day out, it was not an ordinary day but one where I am sure you, at the very least, were prepared to confront Mr Aladejana about money, his elusiveness, his evasiveness and to recover money which had not been paid to you both under the written contract. As I directed the jury, should these efforts be unsuccessful or should any confrontation meet with resistance, then consistent with your violent disposition you intended to use serious violence using knife as a means to the end.

3. The Stabbing.

3.1. Whilst waiting for Mr Aladejana come out onto the front path for a second time, whether you were "limbering up," stretching or warming up in preparation for physical activity as the prosecution suggested or because you were simply stretching due to stiffness after a long 2 hr journey does not require a finding of fact. However, I am sure you knew there would be a confrontation, afterall you went to the front gate with the knife concealed in your pocket ready for use.

3.2 In the Graphics bundle at page 16 and from viewing camera A clip 13 the hedging obscures the activity after Mr Aladejana emerged for that second time. You did not give any account about what then happened, and during your police interviews under caution you did not mention that Mr Aladejana got you in a headlock, bending your head down and seeing a knife in his waistband. Whether there was a struggle, one thing is certain and that is from all the cctv, Mr Aladejana never drew a knife before you stabbed him.

3.4 It is clear from Graphic bundle page 25 still [43] and Clip 13 at 19.23.38 is that your right hand was at your waist and about to draw your knife. Then from clip 14&15 you raised your right hand upwards and stabbed Mr Aladejana in left side of his chest – still [47]. Furthermore, it is clear from still [49] that Mr Aladejana did not draw his knife before you stabbed him. The jury rejected your assertion you acted in self-defence after receiving further directions concerning a person who either starts, or provokes an incident of violence, not in self-defence, and it triggers retaliation, both sides are acting unlawfully and self-defence does not apply. I do not accept you action can be described as acting with excessive self-defence.

3.5 The fatal wound according to the Pathologist was delivered by a thrusting motion with moderate force penetrating the Left ventricle of the heart, perforating the front through to the back of heart.

4. General Sentencing Remarks

4.1 The terrifying reality in this case is that you admitted to routinely carrying a knife. A knife is invariably a dangerous bladed article. Although it is clear that the knife you carried to the scene had a popper and sheath, I am

sure you had undone this ready for use when you were at the front path and spoke to Mr Aladejana.

4.2 What struck me during the trial is the continuing news about carrying knives in public, often concealed in clothing or under coats, that the message is still not being heard. Judge's have attempted to bring home to the public and to young people in a stark way, by imposing lengthy sentences to explain how the courts can deter and help reduce, so far as possible and eradicate the use of knives in violent attacks. Once more the carrying and use of knife is another grim illustration of how knife crime is blighting the streets, towns and cities across the UK and should have no place in modern society.

4.3 Those who routinely carry knives are most likely to cause really serious harm or kill. That is the reality if you choose to carry a knife, which is invariably has a very dangerous blade, like this commando knife, and when used it kills. You are yet one more person who has to take responsibility for blighting the reputation of peaceful London streets and replacing it with the public belief that streets are unsafe. A consequence of that fear is that it affects neighbourhoods' and the local economy and vibrancy of towns. Although it is clear that the knife you carried to the scene had a restraining popper on the sheath, I am sure you had it concealed but ready for use when you arrived and spoke to Mr Aladejana in the event of an expected reaction from him to you turning up on his doorstep out of the blue and to that extend this was not a spontaneous event.

5. Victim Person Statement

5.1 In a moving tribute from Mr Aladejana's partner, Katelyn Edwards, from his mother and sister, each explains how they are left shocked and devastated from his death. They all have the sympathy of the court. No sentence can compensate for that loss, and it should not be thought that the sentences I impose are in any sense an attempt to value his life.

5.2 Sister Adebimpe Aladejana's statement brings into sharp focus how painful loss can be when a family member has their lasting memory of seeing paramedics trying desperately to save her brother's life outside their home. She said "all I can think of and remember is watching the life leaving my brothers eyes as he died in my arms."

5.3 Katelyn Edwards wrote that "three days after Mr Aladejana was killed she gave birth to their daughter. She said my partner was taken from us in the most violent and senseless way. What should have been the happiest and most meaningful time of our lives became the darkest period I have ever experienced. She said Mr Aladejana was her comfort, her support system, and the person who could always lift her up when struggling. Katelyn also makes the point often overlooked that when a killing like this occurs, it has extended harm because a young baby daughter is left to grow up without a father. She will never know his voice, his touch, or the love he had for her before she was even born. Katelyn said she will have to answer questions one day about why

her daughter's father is not here, and that is something no parent should ever have to do. She has been robbed of a lifetime of memories, guidance, and love from him.

5.4 Katelyn said the trauma of what happened has deeply affected her mental health. I suffer from anxiety and depression and have had to start medication just to try to function day to day. I struggle to take care of myself, and even the simplest daily tasks can feel overwhelming. I am not the person I was before this happened.

5.5 Mr Aladejana's mother Lola Paul, in her statement said that her son was so excited to become a parent with his partner, Katelyn, he was so looking forward to becoming a father to his daughter, he could not wait to see what the future would bring for them all together. Losing my son has had a huge impact on me emotionally and physically. It has changed my view of the world. How could someone be so cruel and selfish as to take another's life? I am heartbroken that my son is no longer here.

5.6 Ms Paul also said that stress of her loss has resulted in the deterioration of her health. "I now suffer from migraines and blackouts. My blood pressure has spiralled. I can rarely sleep but feel exhausted and when I do I am woken by nightmares. My memory is not what it was, and I now struggle to remember and recall the simplest things. I struggle with my working life like never before. I no longer enjoy the activities that I once did. Life has changed forever in every way without Ayowale. I feel emotionally drained and empty; I do not find the kind of joy and happiness in life like I have done so in the past. I constantly wish to see my son's face and smile again."

5.7 Throughout this trial which lasted several weeks, the deceased family attended daily, acted with supreme dignity despite the overwhelming grief and I fully appreciate that nothing that this court can do will ever fill the permanent void left by Mr Aladejana's death.

6. Previous convictions

6.1 Mr Wazabanga, you are a 24 year old man born on 24/10/01 and you have 6 previous convictions for 12 offences. In many cases these days it is important to analyse the chronology of offending and the sentences imposed to see whether the non-custodial sentences had any effect on your entrenched criminal character in carrying a knife. It appears that the generous passing of suspended sentences simply has not worked and all that has been achieved is to allow escalation of your criminal conduct to escalate from drug dealing and violent affray to the most serious killing.

6.2 On 20/8/18 aged 17 years old, you were convicted of possession of class A drugs with intent to supply: a SSO was imposed. Following that, you were convicted of affray twice, and also of threatening another with a knife. The first incident occurred on 16/7/19 and the second just 20 days later when you were convicted of affray committed on 3/8/19 and wounding another person

with a machete. Both offences of affray were committed during a long 4-month conspiracy to supply class A drugs ending with your arrest on 24/9/19. You were captured on cctv taking a machete in a sheath from a bag putting it down your trousers then placing it under a bush culminating in you trying to get back into a nightclub.

6.3 On 31/8/23 you received yet another 19-month sentence of imprisonment suspended for 2 years for a third qualifying conviction for possession of 40 wraps of class A drugs with intent to supply, and a third knife conviction when you were sentenced to 6-month sentence suspended for 18 months on 6/10/23. Each should have attracted the minimum term but for some reason that was not imposed, but this conviction for murder and the admitted offence of having a bladed article in public now puts you in breach of the SSO for 19 months.

7. Minimum term tariff

7.1 In determining the appropriate sentence, I am required to specify the minimum term pursuant to section 322 and Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. This is the minimum time which you must serve before you can be considered for release by the Parole Board. There is no guarantee that you will be released after you have served the specified minimum term or at any time thereafter. If, after that minimum term, the Parole Board determines that you are fit to be released, you will be released. If and when that happens, you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life, meaning that you may be recalled at any time to continue your life sentence if you re-offend or otherwise breach the conditions of your licence. Those are the ways in which a life sentence protects the public for the future.

7.2. You will receive credit under section 240 for the 343 days spent on remand which will count towards your sentence. The statutory surcharge will be imposed at the appropriate rate.

7.3 In setting that minimum term, I must first consider the seriousness of your offending. Taking a bladed weapon to the scene and using it to kill is sufficiently serious for the appropriate starting point for the minimum term for murder to be 25 years. Within that length of sentence there is the protection of the public because it embodies an assessment of dangerousness.

7.4 It was accepted by the prosecution that this was not a case where there was a planned journey intending to kill Mr Aladejana, but the purpose was to track him down in order to confront him about finances, his elusiveness, his evasiveness and to recover money which had not been paid under the written contract. Should this be unsuccessful or should any confrontation be met with resistance, then serious violence using the knife to achieve that purpose was envisaged and intended. This was the prosecution case on your conditional intention and to that extent, there was premeditation.

- i. I am satisfied that, as both Prosecution and Defence counsel agree, the appropriate starting point in your case is 25 yrs as specified in paragraph 4(1) to schedule 21.
- ii. I reduce that minimum term to 22 years because it was either accepted by the prosecution or as I find and accept this was not a murder with an intention to kill rather than to cause Mr Aladejana really serious harm.

7.5 Having selected that starting point, paragraph 7 of Schedule 21 requires me to take into account any aggravating or mitigating factors, to the extent that they have not allowed for in the relevant starting point.

8. Aggravating factors

8.1 The statutory aggravating factors which might be relevant are those included in paragraph 9 of Schedule 21 and section 65 of the Sentencing Act. The Court must treat as an aggravating factor each relevant previous conviction having regard the nature of the offence and its relevance to the current offence, and the time that has elapsed since the relevant previous conviction. Despite your age, and the fact the previous convictions date from 2019 to 2023, in my judgement they are relevant not least because you admitted habitually carrying a knife since 2018 for over 7 years to 2025.

8.2 I regard the course of criminal offending and your previous convictions to be relevant as I indicated. The fact you carried a knife during the operation period of suspended sentence order is a relevant factor to your culpability even though Schedule 21 contains no specific reference in paragraph 9 to this being an aggravating factor but activating the suspended sentence under sections 303 and schedule 16 paragraph 13 could have the effect activating to run consecutively to an indeterminate sentence but having regard to the principles of totality, my approach is to treat the breach as another factor justifying an increase to the minimum term by 2 years to 24 years

8.3 Two other factors emerged during the trial. According to the recent information and agreed fact 22, it has still not been possible to access your own phone for either data or phone contact or messages to other persons. You were specifically asked to provide the PIN number during the police interview, but you replied, 'no comment' and subsequently from agreed fact 23 you provided three PIN numbers none of which enabled access to the handset.

8.4 The other factor was on leaving the scene with Ms Belfon driving, you knew you had seriously hurt Mr Aladejana but despite the car stopping for you to go back to pick up your mobile phone, you passed where Mr Aladejana was left dying, but you did not stop, nor call for any emergency service to assist him and when the police did eventually stop the car, you ran off.

9. Mitigating Factors

9.1 I am next required to look at the mitigating factors, some of which are set out in paragraph 10 of Schedule 21. I turn to consider those relevant mitigating factors. I have already taken account that you did not harbour an intention to kill Mr Aladejana.

9.2 I have watched the cctv on countless occasions but to me there was no sudden loss of temper because this was an anticipated confrontation. I discern no excessive self-defence despite Miss Dempster submitting that the Ring Doorbell footage shows both your demeanour when initially standing outside Mr Aladejana's address and the suggest headlock causing you to see he had armed himself with a knife. I do not believe for one moment that he showed the knife, nor that you were put in a headlock despite it appear you had your head lowered and however fast moving the incident was the jury rejected self-defence. The point at which Mr Aladejana had his right hand on his waistband was after you had stabbed him and I do not consider your actions to be categorised as 'excessive self-defence'.

9.3 I have thought about your age, then 23 years old. Whilst age can be a mitigating factor, this should be considered against the background of your previous offending which began in 2018 and demonstrates an entrenched pattern of criminal conduct, diminishing developmental immaturity as a mitigating factor. You do not have any mental disorder nor show any vulnerabilities although I have noted you were a looked after child and you mother agrees more attention should have been given to you. There was no remorse expressed at the time, and you left the scene leaving a dying man without any thought of giving him medical assistance.

9.4 I make clear that I have not treated any account disbelieved by the jury as an aggravating factor. I was the trial judge. I listened to your evidence carefully. I was very much left with the impression that carrying a blade was as common and habitual for you as carrying a phone.

9.5 Nevertheless, there are features I must have regard to and take them into account by balancing them against the other aggravating factors. Furthermore, the breach of a suspended order of 19 months and your admission to carrying the knife in count 2, balance each other out leading to no variation to the 24 year minimum term.

10. Sentencing Remarks

10.1 In respect of the sentence for murder on count 1, there is only one that the law allows me to pass. That is a life sentence. You were 23 years old at the time of the murder in count 1 and the sentence is imprisonment for life with a minimum period of 24 years less 344 days making 23 years 21 days that you must serve before you are first considered for release on licence by the Parole Board. I order forfeiture and destruction of the Combat knife TTT/02

10.2 There will be a concurrent determinate sentence of 18 months expressed as a minimum sentence under section 315 for possessing a bladed article in count 2. It will run concurrently to the life sentence.

10.3 For the admitted breach of the 19-month suspended sentence this will be activated by passing a concurrent determinate sentence of 12 months but will run concurrently. I have had regard to the principles of Totality which is why I have imposed concurrent sentences.

10.4 It is important that you, and everyone concerned with this case or reading or reporting this sentence, understand what your sentence for murder in fact means. The minimum term is the minimum time that you will spend in custody before your case can be considered by the Parole Board.

10.5 It will be for the Parole Board to say at that time whether or not you are fit to be released. There is no guarantee that you will be released at that time, or at any particular time thereafter. If and when you are released, you will be subject to a licence, and this will remain the case for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence were to be revoked, such as if you reoffend, you will be recalled and continue to serve your sentence in custody.

10.6 The surcharge will apply at the appropriate rate and collected in the Magistrates Court. These sentencing remarks are to be included with your prison records for the Parole Board to consider.

11. Transcript of Sentencing remarks

11.1 The provisions in CrimPD Paragraph 9.6.1 applies and I direct that a copy of my written sentencing remarks are made available to the family now that sentence has been passed. The copy should be provided as soon as is reasonably practicable. Thank you.

His Honour Judge Martyn Levett DL.

14th July 2026

