



IN THE CROWN COURT AT MANCHESTER (CROWN SQUARE)

REX

-V-

MOHAMMED ASIM BASHIR

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Mohammed Bashir, you have pleaded guilty preparing acts of terrorism, contrary to s.5 Terrorism Act 2006. You also accept that you disseminated terrorist publications although the prosecution has agreed that those three charges should lie on file and I make that direction on the usual terms. You admit that you intended to commit an act of terrorism or to assist Jihad Al-Shamie to commit an act of terrorism and you engaged in conduct that gave effect to the intention you both shared. You did this by driving Al-Shamie to a Ministry of Defence site at Shrivenham, near Swindon on 14 August 2025 to carry out hostile reconnaissance. Neither of you were detected at the time.
2. After Al-Shamie had attacked the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue here in Manchester, a few weeks later, on 2 October during Yom Kippur, causing the death of two people and himself, police investigated his associations. Evidence emerged of your relationship with him and of the ten-hour trip you made together during which you were able to assess the entrance and reception area of the United Kingdom Defence Academy, Shrivenham which provides professional defence and security education to the British Armed Forces, wider UK government, UK industry and overseas personnel. There will be up to 4,000 staff, contractors, students and visitors on the extensive site at any given time.
3. You left England two days after Al-Shamie's attack on the Synagogue. The Counter Terrorism police investigation has found no evidence that you were involved in it. I am not sentencing you for what he did. You were arrested on 27 November 2025, at Manchester airport when you flew back from a family wedding in Pakistan. You were interviewed on eleven occasions and provided three prepared statements. The accounts you gave presented a false narrative denying your own extremist mindset

and misrepresenting your relationship with Al-Shamie, stating that you were just friends at the mosque and you had no reason to suspect that he would do something like attack a synagogue, as you said never, “in a million years.”

4. After you were charged on 4 December the investigation continued to process a large quantity of material. You pleaded not guilty. On 17 April 2026 in a defence statement which is the formal document you were ordered to serve setting out your case, you continued to deny the allegations. By then the prosecution had served ANPR records of the journey to the area of the MoD facility, and you had to accept you had been Al-Shamie’s driver, but you said you were unaware that he was reconnoitring the site as a potential target for a terrorist attack on UK military personnel. You claimed he had asked you to take him to view a house he was considering moving to. That account was a pack of lies.
5. Your trial was due to start this month. On 30 April the prosecution served a Notice of Further Evidence which contained a detailed viewing log of CCTV footage with audio, of you with Al-Shamie on 9 August 2025. This exposed the truth about your relationship with Al-Shamie. On 5 June you asked for the charge to be put again, and you pleaded guilty. That plea was subject to limitations in a written Basis served on the court and prosecution the same day. In that document you admitted that in the six days before the trip to the Defence Academy you and Al-Shamie had discussed his belief that soldiers from the Israeli Defence Force were being trained in the United Kingdom. The two of you discussed Al-Shamie conducting “some sort of violent attack at the training location.” You claimed that your role would be to drive him there when the plan came to fruition.
6. Certain aspects of your account in the Basis of Plea are not accepted and raise issues which I must determine to know against what factual background you should be sentenced. The court can only make a finding against you on the disputed matters if the prosecution has discharged the burden of proving them to the criminal standard of proof, so that I am sure of what the prosecution alleges. Anything I state as a conclusion will have reached that standard. As in any contested criminal proceedings, you are entitled to give evidence. You have declined to do so, and Mr Nawaz KC has told me that you understand I may draw such inferences as I think proper from the evidence which will not have been explained by you.
7. There are three central issues. To apply the Sentencing Council guideline for preparing acts of terrorism offences it is necessary to decide whether you engaged in significant acts of assistance or encouragement of Al-Shamie or played a leading role in terrorist activity where preparations were not far advanced, either of which would mean your case is one of category C culpability or, as is argued on your behalf, you engaged in very limited preparation or provided lesser assistance or encouragement which is category D. Next, is consideration of the nature of the acts of terrorism which you prepared or assisted in, including the likelihood of multiple deaths being

risked. This determines whether it is a case of category 1 or category 2 harm. Thirdly, I must assess what degree of danger you pose to the public in the future.

8. I apply guidance from the Court of Appeal in *Boular* [2019] 2 Cr. App. R. (S.) which emphasises that both culpability and harm are assessed by reference to the offender's intended course of conduct and the degree to which preparations had progressed. In *Suleman* [2024] 2 Cr. App. R. (S.) the Court confirmed that, when considering harm, the question is not whether deaths in fact occurred, but what harm was risked if the intended plan had succeeded. The court also recognised that voluntary desistance may be relevant when assessing harm and the likelihood of occurrence.
9. Having listened to the evidence presented during this hearing and examined the background material for myself, I reject your basis of plea insofar as it touches on these issues and the arguments made on your behalf as to the guideline. In my judgment this is a case of category C culpability and category 1 harm. I will explain the reasons for my conclusions. Jihad Al-Shamie was a 35-year-old British citizen of Syrian origin. He was arrested in February 2025 for alleged breach of a non-molestation order and again on 21 September 2025 on an allegation of rape. The police seized his telephone handsets after both arrests, although it is likely that you did not know this until after you were charged, because if you had known you might have realised your untruthful accounts to the police would be uncovered.
10. You and he met at the Sunnah Mosque in Cheetham Hill, Manchester in 2023. By the following year you were sharing WhatsApp messages, voice notes and participating in an Islamic extremist chat group titled, 'Aspiring to the Ranks of the Elite.' The evidence is limited because you took steps to avoid detection and the handsets you used up to August 2025 have not been recovered. Nonetheless, the evidence that has been found demonstrates conclusively that you were a firmly committed jihadist by August 2025. In November the previous year you were complaining to Al-Shamie that the material supporting armed jihad and martyrdom that you were posting to a WhatsApp group kept being deleted by the Administrator who you called a "coward". You exchanged virulent antisemitic opinions with him. In voice-notes sent to you in December 2024 Al-Shamie expressed his envy of the mujahideen in Syria and you responded that you had done research about a Salafi-jihadist group operating in Syria called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) which was proscribed in the UK at the time. You expressed a hope that they would be able to establish Sharia in Syria. You also told Al-Shamie that you had rejoiced watching videos of Syrian soldiers being beheaded.
11. The 'Aspiring to the Ranks of the Elite' group had been set up by Al-Shamie in September 2024, and it had 12 members. You sent over 2000 messages to that chat group in six months. Many were about physical violence in the cause of Jihad including calls for persecution and murder. You told the group that the best Muslims are either in prison, on the frontline or in the grave. You exalted martyrdom. You praised Palestinian fighters and you posted messages about restoring glory to Muslim lands by exterminating Jewish men and taking Jewish women as concubines. In three

posts you sent to the group you distributed material originating from the well-known American Yemeni cleric who endorsed violence as a religious duty, Anwar al-Awlaki. In November 2024, nine months before you drove Al-Shamie to the UK Defence Academy at Shrivenham, you posted the content of a series of al-Awlaki's lectures and in December you posted two of his videos, all with the same themes of the desirability and benefits of joining jihad and martyrdom. The last message into this chat group was on the day that Al-Shamie was arrested in February 2025.

12. Turning to the degree of preparation that you and Al-Shamie engaged in. The Sunnah Mosque was a meeting place for you in August 2025, and you chose to spend time in parts of it where you thought you would not be recorded or observed. Unknown to you some of your conversation was CCTV and audio recorded, and this has been analysed alongside internet searches recovered by a police warrant addressed at cloud data. On 9 August, five days before your journey to Shrivenham, you spent hours together in and around the mosque. During this time, you were both on your phones and although your handset has not been recovered, I am sure you were entirely aware of and joining in with Al-Shamie's searches concerning IDF (Israeli Defence Force) soldiers in the United Kingdom. A search returned a site in Central London and soon you were speaking about a Defence Academy. You are heard telling Al-Shamie that you should buy a phone to do the research on, a reference to an anonymous disposable device to hide what you were doing. You discussed hiring a car and how much it would cost. There is discussion of the weapons to be deployed, and he suggested getting a crossbow, while you gestured as if holding a large firearm. He later searched for crossbow and is seen on cctv with the packaging for a Nokia 105 'burner' phone handset.
13. As to the nature of the violence you were planning, you told Al-Shamie you were really excited and he said that once you went on the mission you would not be coming back and you said, "of course." You said there would be security who would come at the two of you. As you left the mosque that evening you said that this time next year you will be, "in green birds" which is a reference to paradise and martyrdom. I am sure that at this point you and he intended to commit an act of terrorism against a military target, using some weapons such as crossbows, in which you expected to lose your lives. It was to have nation-wide and international impact.
14. On 13 August Al-Shamie searched for the Defence Academy in Shrivenham on Google maps. He also made more searches for a crossbow. That evening you spent 40 minutes together in his car. You drove the car to Shrivenham the next morning and it is likely that the two of you stopped for no more than 15 minutes at the MoD base. That was enough time to take a good look at the main gate and the entrance to reception because Al-Shamie made an iPhone note describing it. He wrote, 'there's a desk from one side to the other, two old women sat there, behind them is a corridor. Either side are two rooms open. Women coming in and out and at the back of the building there's a door that leads to a search bay.' That day you sold your mobile phone. I am sure this was intended to hide your activity. The shop that took it resets

phones to factory settings. You also erased your Microsoft account security information which means data collected by Microsoft such as files, emails, internet browsing records and GPS locations disappeared.

15. Over the next few days, you continued to spend time with Al-Shamie and records show he continued internet research about the MoD base. On 15 August the two of you were in his car for nearly an hour, plainly having decided that even the mosque was too exposed for your conversations. On that occasion he also searched for 'suicide vest fancy dress.' However, on 19 August a ticket was booked for you to go to your brother's wedding in October. Analysis of the mosque cctv shows that from 17 August your interactions with Al-Shamie continued but gradually diminished. His attention turned to the Heaton Park Synagogue from 29 August until he carried out the atrocity there and died. I see no evidence that distancing yourself from Al-Shamie reflected remorse or a genuine change of heart, but I accept it was voluntary desistance before any further practical steps were taken.
16. On 4 October you travelled to Pakistan. You didn't contact the police to report anything about your contact with Al-Shamie before or after the synagogue attack. At some point prior to returning to the United Kingdom, you activated the 'erase all contents and settings' function on your phone.
17. To summarise, the preparation was not close to completion but between you, you had agreed to carry out a terrorist attack, identified a potential location, considered what weapons were to be used, discussed getting rid of your phones, Al-Shamie had acquired a 'burner' phone, you had discussed hiring a car (rather than using your own), a mock suicide vest was searched for, you visited the target site and noted how to get in and what sort of initial engagement would be required. More importantly, I am sure that you and he anticipated that you would both be martyred and you intended to kill others. This means that I accept the prosecution's contention that the inference to be drawn from all the evidence is that this was a viable plan to attack the Defence Academy in a broadly similar way to that in which that Al-Shamie attacked the synagogue; using handheld weapons and a dummy suicide vest to cause as much bloodshed as possible. I am sure you were going to play an active part, hence your relish of the idea of green birds, martyrdom.
18. Obviously, the attack didn't happen, you chose not to proceed, and you are being sentenced for planning it. In your Basis of plea, you say you did not condone the Heaton Park Congregational Hebrew Synagogue attack. It is not necessary for me to determine what your attitude to the 2 October attack was but I note that you were expressing antisemitic hostility as late as August 2025, the motive for the MoD site proposed attack was that IDF soldiers had been training there, and there is no evidence that you changed your mind on those topics.
19. The result of this is that I reject Mr Nawaz's argument that the proposed attack remained at an early and ill-defined stage by the time you both travelled to Shrivenham. It was far advanced, lacking only the acquisition of weapons, but it did

not go further. I have explained why I also reject his submission that multiple deaths were not very likely to be caused.

20. I turn to whether the statutory test of dangerousness is met, namely whether there is a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission by you of further specified offences. So, who are you, Mohammed Bashir? You are aged 31. You have no previous convictions. You have a generally stable background, including supportive family relationships, educational attainment and a history of employment with no financial problems. I have seen a bundle of eloquent references from family members and others who have known you for years. All of them praise your character. None of them would have expected you to have behaved in the way you have admitted. You didn't let on to those closest to you that you had become an adherent of extreme Islamist ideology.
21. I have the benefit of a full pre-sentence report. To its author you attempted to minimise your conduct by describing it as curiosity, learning, bravado and naivety. I reject that account as lacking credibility. I agree with the report's central conclusion that your behaviour reflected an "ingrained mindset" rather than a transient phase. As well as the records patched together during the investigation, in particular I have viewed the footage of you with Al-Shamie on 9 August 2025, a man who went on within six weeks to carry out a deadly attack and it is clear that you are both equally involved in and eager about your plans. You are aware of detection risks, using multiple devices and deploying operational security measures even when travelling back to the United Kingdom in November 2025.
22. Although you told the author of the report that you no longer hold extremist views and you regret your actions, she was left unconvinced that there has been genuine change. Like her, I have concluded that you remain dangerous. This is because having moved beyond ideological sympathy and towards practical involvement in preparatory terrorist activity and sharing extremist material, you have given no grounds to believe that your attitude has really changed at all. Experience has shown that it is very difficult for those who embrace extreme ideology to extract themselves from it without long term effort and assistance. Indeed, the identified future risk in your case is not limited to you personally committing violence but includes inciting, assisting, encouraging or radicalising others to do so.
23. The result from all these findings is that I take a guideline starting point at C1, aggravated by the possession and dissemination of extremist material, communication with other extremists in the chat group, efforts to prevent detection and the fact that the target was an armed forces site. There is limited mitigation in your lack of previous convictions. Your guilty plea must be recognised by a proportionate reduction which in this case I set at about 15%.
24. Stand up Muhammad Asim Bashir. You are Manchester born and bred. You have not revealed what caused you to turn on the society that you had grown up in, gone to school and college in, worked in, and where your family was able to practise your

religion in freedom and peace. You told the Probation Officer who prepared the pre-sentence report that the violence in Palestine angered an upset you and led to you admiring and sharing the rhetoric that hate preachers like Al-Alaki used to poison minds. By last August you were close friends with a man who would soon go on to carry out an appalling terrorist attack targeting the Jewish community in your home city. Your interactions caught on video at the mosque on 9 August show two equally engaged and enthusiastic men planning an atrocity against a British military facility for religious and political reasons.

25. Your example must stand as a warning to men who are attracted by this form of militant, violent and destructive Islam for religious or political reasons. Character is contagious. In the Jewish book of Proverbs 13:20 this is expressed bluntly, "*He that walks with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*" The values and behaviour of the people you revere will directly influence your own life and choices.
26. I impose a serious crime prevention order as drawn up, for five years after your release from custody. There will be no limit on the number of times the police may visit and inspect compliance with the restrictions on devices that the order imposes. The statutory surcharge applies. You are subject to mandatory terrorism notification requirements for the rest of your life.
27. For planning to carry out a terrorist attack on the Ministry of Defence, Defence Academy at Shrivenham in August 2025, in which you and Jihad Al-Shamie expected to kill and be killed, the sentence must be life imprisonment. I impose a minimum term of 16 years and 135 days. This is a notional determinate sentence of 17 years less the period you have spent on remand, 230 days. You will serve the whole of the minimum term before you can be considered for parole. If you are ever considered safe to be released, you will be on licence and liable to recall to prison for the rest of your life.

Cheema-Grubb J.

23 July 2026