



IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

BETWEEN:

REX

-v-

SULAIMAN TAJZAI

SENTENCING REMARKS

ANCILLARY MATTERS

I commend the investigating officers in this case DS Paul Dring the Case Office and DC Polly Rose was the CCTV Officer. Ms Wilding KC has described their commitment, professionalism and contribution to the case as outstanding and this was a very competently investigated case

with no stone left unturned and enabling the evidence to be presented here with such clarity and force.

The Crown applies for forfeiture and destruction of the knife

The statutory surcharge applies.

Any calculation errors must be notified to the court immediately and can be correct administratively.

These sentencing remarks are written down and will be uploaded to the digital case system. They must accompany this defendant to the prison where he will start his sentence and placed on his records. It must be translated to him following this hearing. The terms used in these remarks are technical in part and the defendant will have them explained to him in a conference after this hearing which the security staff should facilitate.

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Sulaimain Tajzai, I sentence you for the murder of Farmanullah Sherzad and the possession of a bladed article. You pleaded guilty to these offences on 11th September at the conclusion of the Prosecution case. The jury had heard 7 days of evidence.
2. On 27th March 2026 Mr Farmanullah Sharzad, aged 26, arrived outside his home on the Peabody Estate near Abbey Orchard Street in Westminster. He had just finished work. The jury saw his last moments on CCTV and heard about them from witnesses. You were lying in wait for him outside his house.
3. The jury saw CCTV of your movements leading up to you waiting outside Mr Sherzad's address that day. You left your accommodation in Leeds early. You had packed a bag containing items including gloves, a balaclava and various items of clothing to change into. You intended to disguise your appearance and had taken steps to prepare for what was to happen and to plan how to avoid responsibility.
4. You went to a shop where you spent some minutes choosing a large knife from the selection available. You then travelled to London and made your way to where Mr Sherzad lived. The jury watched those portions of your journey captured on CCTV. You had face coverings on. This was not your first trip to London or to Mr Sharzad's home area.

5. In the months before this date the jury heard evidence that you had stalked Mr Sherzad and had had travelled to London to do reconnaissance as to where he lived and worked. On one of these occasions, you followed him and found out his daily routine. You were effectively stalking him down like prey. You had a grudge against him based on a false suggestion of misconduct towards a female you are connected with. It is not said on your behalf, nor could it be, that you had any justifiable or excusable grievance against this man.
6. As Mr Sherzad approached his home you confronted him. The packaging for the knife you had earlier bought was found in foliage outside his home. You had taken the knife out ready for his return. On seeing you Mr Sherzad tried to get away and dropped his personal belongings as he ran. He must have seen the knife and the balaclava you were wearing and realised that death was close. As he ran away and you pursued him, determined.
7. Witnesses heard his repeated loud screams for help. Some saw you chasing him with the disguise and the knife. One witness shouted at you to leave him alone during the final moments of the pursuit but then saw you slash at him. The CCTV shows him completely helpless on the ground as you repeatedly stab him in including in his back. Mr Sherzad's last moments were spent in terror and anguish that can only be imagined.
8. This was an exceptionally violent knife attack Mr Sherzad suffered at least 10 external stab wounds together with multiple deep slash

wounds to the face, neck, chest, back and arms. The attack severed major blood vessels in the neck, penetrated the heart and thoracic aorta. injured both lungs leaving his lung protruding from the chest wall and caused catastrophic blood loss. Some of his bones were fractured several of the injuries were defensive in nature, indicating attempts to fend you off. He could not have survived this attack.

9. I sentence you on the basis that this was a planned and premeditated killing over the course of some months and that your intention was to kill your victim.
10. After you killed Mr Sherzad you left him lying in the street and ran away. You disposed of anything that you thought might link you to his murder including changing your clothes and attempted to disguise yourself. You went back to Leeds. When you were arrested you did not make any admissions and would not give the police the PIN to your phone.
11. I have heard submissions that you observed the clear and severe impact of family members who were listening to Mr Shahrzad's last moments. It must also have been clear to you that the defences you said you were going to present - self-defence, loss of control and lack of intention were completely unsustainable and should you give evidence and be cross examined this may well have become extremely clear to the jury trying you.

12. I give you no credit for this guilty plea which, in my judgement and applying the relevant guideline, was entered when it became clear to you that your defence was almost certain to be rejected.
13. Mr Sherzad's brother Sangein Miakhel describes the devastating and far-reaching impact his death upon him and the wider family. Farmanullah was a friendly, respectful, hardworking and grateful young man who was deeply loved by those around him and who worked very hard. Since his death, the family has experienced profound sadness, anxiety and loneliness, losing not only a beloved brother and son but also an important source of emotional support and family unity. The witness explains that Farmanullah shared a special relationship with the family's children. Their parents have suffered particularly acutely, enduring overwhelming grief and emotional distress, and have required hospital treatment because of the trauma caused by learning of his death. The witness also describes significant changes to family life, social relationships and family gatherings, emphasising that Farmanullah's loss extends far beyond bereavement. The loss carries on every day.
14. Nawaz Doost was Mr Sherzad's lifelong friend and has suffered profound and continuing trauma. He knew him since childhood in Afghanistan and remained extremely close in London and considered him family. The witness remains haunted by witnessing the aftermath of the attack, stating that the sight of Farman dying and his screams "will never go out of my mind." He

reports recurrent distressing memories and disturbed sleep, with nightmares that wake him and alarm his wife. The loss has overshadowed what should have been a joyful period when his first child was born. The witness describes feeling stunned, living “in a daze,” becoming forgetful and distracted in daily life, and experiencing paranoia and fear that he too may be attacked. He says he no longer feels safe and feels a lasting “void” and “emptiness” in his life. His statement conveys the devastating impact of losing a lifelong friend and continues to this day.

15. The planning, of this attack and the premeditation and stalking of Mr Sherzad in the months before significantly aggravate this offence. He was ambushed by you and you intended to kill him. Also aggravating is your behaviour in trying to avoid detection before and after the crime including disguising yourself and disposing of evidence. You were wearing a balaclava during this murder. The attack was savage and took place on a public street in a built up area of London causing those who witnessed it ongoing emotional trauma.

16. I do consider on the evidence made available to me and the legal cases that have been sent and discussed in notes and in submission that there is some doubt about your true age. You were nominated a date of birth when you arrived in this country. It is for the Prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that you are 18. I am going to sentence you on the basis that you might be

17 and therefore just short of your 18th year. You were, even on your own case, very close to 18.

17. I look at a guideline that has been set in relation to sentencing people under 18. Age isn't just the number but must be assessed with the guideline in mind and I have reminded myself of a legal case called R v Clarke which expresses that there is no cliff edge in relation to age. I have read the various reports uploaded about you.

18. I take into account your age when calculating the minimum term and therefore it is not double counted as a mitigating factor. Ms Hussein will explain all these legal terms to you with the translator after this hearing.

19. I do not find any evidence that you are particularly immature.

20. I also look at a guideline relating to sentencing those with mental. Disorders. You have been assessed as having PTSD from you account of your early upbringing in Afghanistan although this did not offer you any defence or have any connection with your conduct on 27th March. You killed Mr Sherzhad because of a personal grudge and not because of any mental illness. But I do consider your formative experiences and take them into account.

21. You have no previous cautions or convictions.

22. In relation to the Count 2 the sentence for these runs alongside the sentence for murder and I accept the submissions I have heard as to the sentencing guidelines and the categorisation factors I should take into account. 3 years concurrent with the other sentence.
23. The sentence for murder is mandatory. For those under 18 it is called detention at his Majesty's pleasure, but what it means is life imprisonment. You go to prison for life. You will always be subject to licence and to recall if ever released. The terms and conditions of the sentence end with your death and you are subject to its consequences for the rest of your life.
24. You may never be released but I must, by law, set a minimum term that you must serve before you can even apply for release. I emphasise to you that this is not your sentence. That is a life sentence called detention at his majesty's pleasure.
25. For the term you must serve before you can even try to be considered for release there are legal starting points that apply. Here it is 23 years as I find you might be 17 and you took a knife to the scene of the murder.
26. I then take into account those facts that make this murder more serious and anything in your favour.

27. Given the very serious aggravating features here a minimum term of 27 years would be justified before I take into account your lack of convictions and your background and the reports I have read.
28. I reduce the term you must serve before release can be considered to 25 years minus 171 days you have already spent in custody. 24 years and 194 days - or a total of 8954 days.
29. You are Detained at His Majesty's pleasure, which means life imprisonment with a minimum term of 25 years minus 171 days.

HHJ Angela Rafferty KC
Central Criminal Court
18th September 2026