

IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

R v Mohammed Farah Mohamoud

Sentencing remarks

Mr Justice Lickley

1. Mohammed Farah Mohamoud; you are to be sentenced having been found guilty of one offence contrary to S.5 Terrorism Act 2006 in that you with the intention of committing an act or acts of terrorism, engaged in conduct in preparation for giving effect to that intention. The indictment period covered 1 October 2024 to 5 March 2025.
2. The particulars of the offence alleged acts of preparation being purchasing flight tickets for travel to Garowe Somalia, travelling from London to Garowe, communicating with others and an AI Bot about travel to Somalia, using encrypted communications to seek advice from others about terrorist groups and that you travelled within the Puntland region of Somalia.
3. Background: Islamic state (IS) is a Sunni Islamist terrorist organisation. It was proscribed as an organisation concerned in terrorism under Section 3 of the Terrorism Act 2000 by the UK government in June 2014. Islamic state Somalia province which came into existence in 2015 is covered by the proscription of Islamic state.
4. Professor Stig Hansen, an expert in IS in Somalia, told the court that IS is inherently expansionist and sees a need for the Muslim entities to come together as one. IS adherents and supported follow an extreme form of Sunnism that is rejected by the vast majority of Sunni Muslims. He said they believe that you need to throw away national and secular borders because they are regarded as sinful because they divide Muslims. There are videos to show successes and to show Islamic rulers they see as non-believers. He said IS in Somalia shares the ideology of the wider IS organisation and aims to bring together a central Islamic state and methodology although there are some variations in terms of recruitment. He said the IS will use regular military means including terror and

guerrilla methods and pressurising people to get protection money. Terror and extortion are linked. He said extortion takes place behind enemy lines. He said foreign fighters are recruited from northern Somalia and from foreign countries. He said there had been training camps in Somalia, but some were now defunct.

5. An IS enclave had been existence in the northeastern Somalian region of Puntland centered in the Al Miskaad mountains from 2016 when IS took control of that area. To the west is the city of Basaso on the northern coast of Somalia.
6. From December 2024 to March 2025 an international military force involving local regional forces from Puntland and the US Airforce had been engaged in armed conflict to remove the IS forces. The international operation, named Operation Hillac, was largely successful and the IS force suffered losses and retreated. Professor Hansen said that an IS counterattack on 8th February 2025 was repelled. By late February IS morale was broken, areas were retaken with IS fighters being captured. The major battles were from January to mid-February 2025. He said moving around at that time would have been difficult with screening on roads and monitoring. He said in the period from 30 January to 5 March 2025 it would have been difficult but still possible for an individual to join IS.
7. Professor Hansen said a recruit in 2025 might have a high expectation of death. A person having travelled and sworn allegiance would therefore have a higher expectation of being in heaven and sacrifice was important to such a person. If a person had fulfilled their wish of leaving home and swearing an oath of allegiance they had travelled a route and needed to die. He said sometimes they lived to fight another day. He said if you were an untrained recruit with no military experience or knowledge of the terrain there was a high likelihood of dying. He said at that time the fighting was intensive and it was very perilous to be an IS fighter. He said it was a 'kill zone' even for trained mountain men. He said he had seen effectively useless foreign fighters deployed as suicide bombers or fighters.
8. The facts: You are now 22 having been born in April 2004 in Somalia. After a disrupted upbringing that involved moving to live with relatives in other countries you came to the UK to live with you mother and a sibling in Bristol when you were 16 or 17. You

went to college and was studying English maths and cooking and he went to the gym. At that time, you said were not interested in religion.

9. You told the court that in 2024 you began watching online material via You Tube initially and you viewed radical Islamic material. You said your attitudes and beliefs changed. You began to believe that the only true existence was one of radical Islam and those who participated in democracies albeit of the Muslim faith were non-believers. You said you watched a video against democracy on TikTok promoting Islamic state. You commented online publicly saying you wanted to join IS.
10. Following that you began to talk to others and later what is known as a Bot or robot being an automated software programme running over the internet to answer questions. In your case you asked about joining IS. You used Telegram an encrypted telecommunications system. A Sequence of events schedule was produced for the trial. It is by its very nature selective. It runs from 22 October 2024 to 10 January 2026 when you were arrested. There are 801 entries. In summary:
 - (i) You watched IS fighting and combat videos set to a nasheed or audio chant from 22 October 2024 including videos showing prisoners of IS being executed by beheading. You followed news updates of the military conflict and had access IS periodical Al Naba even after your return to the UK.
 - (ii) You reached out to a person on TikTok on 27 December 2024 stating that you wanted to travel to Basaso and join the mujahadin but did not have contacts or someone to guide you. A telegram link was provided. Al Hijrateyn a media outlet for IS in Somalia contacted you. On 28 December 2024 you were told the situation on Somaliland was not easy. You continued the conversation with a person Muksind1. On 1 January 2025 you had discovered that a number of the regional forces had been killed and asked for a video to be made showing them being treated like the Shia who were targeted by IS as polytheists so people could understand. Later that day you said you hoped God would bring your dream to life.
 - (iii) From later that day you began a conversation with a person in Somalia named Abu Ladin. You knew him by a different name Abdul Khani. You said he was the same person as Muxsind1. You communicated using Telegram. He had yet

to join IS but expressed a willingness to do so. You were warned about communication and security. Your conversations included sharing images of fallen IS fighters and a plan to meet in Somalia and to join the leader of IS Sheik Mumin.

- (iv) On 5 January 2025 you told Abu Ladin that you had purchased a ticket to travel to Somalia on the 4 February 2025. That was not true. You said you would never return to the UK. Abu Ladin told you that the war prevented you from crossing to the land controlled by IS. You replied, '*no problem, the importance is that I leave from this country*'. You suggested meeting in Garowe and renting a house to be told that Abu Ladin did not have the financial means to do that. You said you had savings to cover expenses and offered to pay his costs. Another video depicting training and executions was sent with a large number of audio files including one entitled 'Encouraging martyrdom and suicide operations'.
- (v) The conversation continued with a discussion about meeting with you saying that there was nothing better than spending money for the sake of God or Jihad.
- (vi) On 11 and 12 January 2025 you purchased hiking boots and a portable charger solar power bank and a flashlight for use in Somalia and in particular the mountains given the remote terrain.
- (vii) On 13 January 2025 you purchased a return ticket to Garowe Somalia via Addis Ababa departing on 30 January and returning on 3 March 2025 at a cost of £493. You said that you had no intention of returning to the UK but told your family your visit was to see family in Somalia and go to the beach. The same day Abu Ladin told you of the ongoing conflict saying '*the land below cannot be crossed*'.
- (viii) On 14 January 2025 you messaged Abu Ladin and said you were people of the hereafter, how you would reach your ambition and the promise of 70 hurul ayn or virgins to be given to you on death in paradise. Another IS propaganda combat and beheading video was sent on this day.
- (ix) The plan to meet was discussed from the 15 January 2025 in the message conversations. The next day you repeated your aim to meet in Garowe, go to Basaso and join the Mujahadeen.
- (x) On 17 January 2025 in a message to Abu Ladin you expressed a wish to send money left after living expenses to the Mujahadeen to be used to collect you both and to buy weapons and clothes for you. Later Abu Ladin withdrew from

the plan to meet. Despite that you said you would still travel and if possible still join the Mujahadeen. Abu Ladin told you that you were facing serious danger in a message that day.

- (xi) On 21 January 2025 you told Abu Ladin that you did not have a guide or a plan. He replied saying there was no route meaning a way to reach the Mujahadeen until the situation settled down and the need to be careful when speaking to people. You replied that you had to reach the Mujahadeen before your return or you would be reported missing. Abu Ladin told you on 23 January 2025 of the dangerous situation and advised you to stay in the UK. Later Abu Ladin referred to you both being in the same training camp. You replied saying that dying was not a problem. On 25 January 2025 you said in a message that God willing the disbelievers will be defeated. The next day you talked of the best thing being martyrdom.
- (xii) On 30 January 2025 you took your flight and arrived in Garowe. The next day you communicated with a Bot stating that you wanted to join the Mujahadeen. Your conversation with Abu Ladin continued. You began however to talk to a new contact Abu Ali via Telegram. He is believed to be an IS recruiter. By the 4 February 2025 you were in Basaso. You referred to the regional forces as 'Pigs' in a message.
- (xiii) Abu Ali told you on 6 February 2025 that travel by road was difficult. He then asked you a series of screening questions about you and your family. You replied and said in one answer that you did not wish to return to the UK and wanted to die in the cause of God. You added that you returned to Somalia to join the Mujahadeen. You discussed the suspicions of your family about you with Abu Ladin. He advised you to return to the UK if the fighting was prolonged. More screening questions were sent by Abu Ali and answered.
- (xiv) On the 11 February 2025 you left Basaso and went to the town of Waaciye via the town of Laag. More screening type questions followed from Abu Ali. Abu Ali reminded you of the airstrikes and the fierce combat taking place. You replied that you were longing for martyrdom.
- (xv) On 14 February 2025 you told Abu Ali of your contact with Abu Ladin. He told you that you were not supposed to talk about your situation with anyone else. You were told not to share details. Another message connection was established using an F-Droid application. No content was recoverable from that application.

What was discussed is therefore unknown. You relayed the outcome with Abu Ladin that you had been told that it was not possible to travel because of checkpoints. You had been advised to go back to the UK until things settled. You told the jury you were offered a job as an IS spy in Basaso but declined the offer. The offer of that trusted and important role demonstrates that you had established direct links to IS operatives in Somalia.

- (xvi) On 1 March 2025 you told Abu Ladin that you had been thinking of leaving for 10 days. Later that day you told him that what you had gone to do was impossible. You flew back to the UK on the planned return flight.
- (xvii) On 10 March 2025 you told Abu Ladin that your aim was Jihad meaning Holy war. Abu Ali asked you if you were going back on 17 March 2025. You replied *'anytime you need me just say the word'*. More IS combat and beheading videos were recovered from your phone dated in late March. Even on 28 March 2025 you were still telling Abu Ladin that your goal in life was to be among the Mujahadeen. Your conversation with Abu Ladin continued until your arrest in November 2025.
- (xviii) Having returned in subsequent messages you said on 8 April 2025 'Apostates does not deserve nothing but slaughtering and insults' and on 18 May 2025 you said 'I will go among the apostates of Puntland with my gun and mine and kill as many of them as I can'

- 11. On your arrest you did hand over the code to your phone. In eleven interviews you said nothing.
- 12. Your account, rejected by the jury, was that you travelled intending to join IS and the Mujahadeen and having sworn an oath of allegiance you said you intended only to die on the battlefield and become a martyr. You denied having any intention to be trained, armed in any way or to engage in violence. You accepted seeing injured regional soldiers being treated and thought that was good because you saw them as infidels and disbelievers. You said you were not a peace-loving person when you tried to join IS.
- 13. The prosecution case accepted by the jury was that you account was untrue. You did, as the jury found, have an intention to commit one or more terrorist acts and were in Somalia to do that. That would have meant joining IS being armed, potentially trained

and engaging in combat against the regional and other forces. That would be an act or acts of terrorism.

14. The evidence demonstrates that having become radicalised you travelled to Somalia determined to join IS. You knew IS were involved in an ongoing military conflict. You were connected to an IS recruiter Abu Ali and answered screening questions. You were offered a role within the organisation. Despite being told on numerous occasions of the risks involved and how difficult it would be to join IS you remained determined to join. You did all that you could to join IS. You were prevented from joining by factors outside your control. That said you did eventually make a decision to come back to the UK. Having done that your beliefs did not change.
15. I have no doubt that if the situation had been different in Somalia you would have joined IS and taken part in the fighting. As accepted by Mr Thomas on your behalf you set out to join IS in its military guise.
16. I am satisfied that if you had joined IS you would have been used in a combat role taking an active part in the armed conflict. It is most likely you would have fulfilled a minor role under direction given your lack of military experience and training. Your combat role may have been short-lived given the circumstances.
17. Sentencing guideline: I am required to apply the offence specific guideline for this offence updated on 5 October 2026. I am required to determine your culpability and the level of harm. I have considered the submissions made on your behalf by Mr Thomas.
18. This is not a case where you were apprehended and stopped from achieving your aim by others. However, apprehension means being prevented from realising an objective. In this case you were prevented from achieving your aim because the situation in Somalia meant you could not join IS. In my judgement that amounts to the same thing. This is not a case of very limited preparation. As I have said you did all that you could to join IS and you were persistent in that aim.
19. Culpability: I agree with the prosecution submission that your culpability falls within category C. I cannot be sure that your role would have been significant however I am

satisfied you would have played at least a lesser role '*where preparations were complete or were so close to completion that, but for apprehension, the activity was very likely to have been carried out*'.

20. In *R v Boulter and Boulter* [2019] EWCA 798 the court reiterated that principle. At Paragraph 50 Holroyd LJ said '*The culpability factors reflect how determined the offender was to carry out that intention and how close the offender came to doing so*'. You were very determined and took considerable steps over a prolonged period to achieve your aim of joining IS. As I have said you could have done no more.
21. Harm; The fact that you did not reach and join the IS fighters is a factor to consider however your intention is key. When assessing seriousness s.63 Sentencing Act 2020 makes clear that I must assess your culpability and any harm caused, intended to be caused or that which might reasonably be caused. I am sure you intended very significant harm if not death to the regional force soldiers as I have described when engaging in combat.
22. The sentencing guideline requires me to consider that '*Harm is assessed based on the type of harm risked and the likelihood of that harm being caused. When considering the likelihood of harm the court should consider the viability of any plan.*'
23. Your plan was not impossible as Professor Hansen said but difficult because of the ongoing conflict. However your intention was, I am satisfied to join IS and engage in the armed fighting. That means multiple deaths were risked but given the circumstances not very likely to be caused category 2.
24. I am satisfied therefore that the correct sentencing category for your offending is category C2. The sentence starting point is therefore 15 years with a range of 10 to 20 years custody.
25. Aggravating factors: The sentencing guideline sets out statutory factors that if applicable will justify an upward movement to the starting point. Many of the factors said by the prosecution to amount to aggravating factors are in fact ingredients of your offence. The factors that are additional are your possession of extremist material, your

encouragement of Abu Ladin and your conversations with Abu Ali and Qaad who were IS extremists. It was an ingredient of the offence that your offending was to advance a religious or radical cause and that you used encrypted communications.

26. Mitigation. You were of previous good character and you were young aged 20 at the time. Having heard you give evidence I am satisfied that you are not unintelligent however you may have been somewhat naive given the obvious way you approached your initial attempts to join IS. Those factors serve to reduce the notional sentence after trial.
27. Other mitigation: I have taken into account the letter from Saed Ali concerning how your mother has been affected and how she requires support for her mental health.
28. Pre-sentence report: The report dated 19 October 2026 informs me that you have said you were depressed at the time of your offending and were unhappy with your position in life. You are said to have been vulnerable at the time. You were however in work. I note that you were using cannabis and drinking.
29. The author of the pre-sentence report noted that you were not manipulated by others because you actively sought contact with IS supporters. You are said to continue to minimise the potential harm arising from your actions. By travelling to Somalia intending to locate and join IS fighters demonstrated a high level of commitment planning and determination.
30. You have said that by August 2025 you had begun to no longer identify with IS and had returned to ordinary daily life. The author of the report urged caution regarding your stated change of attitude given your prolonged period of commitment to IS and their ideology.
31. The author of the report concluded that you present a high risk of causing serious harm to individuals or groups you regard as 'disbelievers. You are said to pose a risk of radicalising others within custody.

32. Custodial term. I conclude that in your case the mitigating factors outweigh the aggravating factors I have set out. Therefore, taking into account the sentencing starting point of 15 years and making upward and downward adjustments for the aggravating and mitigating factors the appropriate custodial term in your case is one of 12 years. I have other matters to consider, however.
33. Dangerousness: I am required given the offence you have committed to consider Whether you pose ‘*a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm occasioned by the commission by you of further specified offences*’.
34. In my judgement and having taken into account all of the facts of the case, the pre-sentence report and all that I know about you I find that until you change your radical beliefs and entrenched support for IS you do pose and will continue to pose a significant risk of causing serious harm to members of the public meaning death or serious physical injury by committing specified offences. That is my assessment of you today. I have taken account of the fact that as you become older you may mature, and your attitudes may change. However, until significant work is undertaken with you and that, very much depends on your willingness to participate, the high risk you pose will remain.
35. Serious terrorism sentence s.282A-C Sentencing Act 2020: Despite my finding of dangerousness because I have found that the harm category in this case is level 2 meaning that multiple deaths were risked but not very likely to be caused the multiple deaths condition necessary for such a sentence to be imposed namely that the offence was very likely to result in or contribute to (whether directly or indirectly) the deaths of at least two people is not met.
36. I am also satisfied that a sentence for life is not justified in the circumstances.
37. Because you have been convicted of a schedule 18 offence for the reasons I have said I am satisfied that you do present such a risk that you are dangerous within the definition of s.308 Sentencing Act 2020.

38. I have considered whether a standard determinate sentence is appropriate. If imposing such a sentence the least period of detention I could have imposed in all the circumstances of your case would have been one of 12 years.
39. Such a sentence would not fully address the risk you currently represent, and I do consider it necessary to impose an extended sentence in order to protect the public in the future. The extended sentence is made up of two parts: a custodial period, which will be no longer than the 12 year period I mentioned, and an extended licence period of four years, making an extended sentence of 16 years' duration in total.
40. You will serve two-thirds of the custodial period in prison before the Parole Board will consider whether it is safe to release you, and if so on what terms.
41. Once released, you will serve on licence any part of the custodial period which remains, and you will then be subject to an extended licence for a further period of four years, making 16 years in all.
42. If, when you are subject to licence, you commit another offence or fail to comply with the terms of your release, you are liable to be recalled to custody and may serve the entire sentence in custody.
43. The days which you have spent on remand in custody will automatically count towards the custodial term of your sentence. That is 8 months and 29 days to today's date. If that is incorrect the case should be relisted within 56 days for correction.
44. Forfeiture: I make an order for forfeiture and destruction of your two mobile phones and the SIM card from Somali Telecom company Golis.
45. Notification requirements: Because of the sentence I have imposed you will be subject to notification requirements for 30 years.
46. The appropriate surcharge order will made.

Sentence:

Mohamed Mohamoud for the offence of engaging in acts of preparation intending to commit an act or acts of terrorism contrary to s.5 of the Terrorism Act 2006 you are sentenced to an extended determinate sentence of 16 years being made up of a custodial element of 12 years and an extended licence period of 4 years.

Dated 19 October 2026