



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

Leicester Magistrates Court

18 February 2013

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-v-

Liam Ferrar

Sentencing remarks of District Judge Temperley

You have pleaded guilty to an offence of intentional harassment contrary to s4A Public Order Act 1986. The offence was religiously aggravated. In the early hours of Boxing Day last year, you placed a severed pig's head outside the entrance doors to the Thurnby Lodge Community Centre, a building that has been used as a place of worship and Madrasah by a Muslim prayer group for approximately three years.

This offence was to some extent planned, premeditated and targeted. You were well aware of the significance of your actions. You knew that what you did would cause great distress, indeed that was your intention. On your version of events you had acquired the pigs head several months earlier. If that is true, your decision to keep it suggests that you either you or someone else had an offence such as this in mind. The timing of the offence may have been random but it was in my view clearly premeditated. The fact you were under the influence of alcohol is not a mitigating factor.

The pig's head was positioned in such a way that it could not be avoided by all those, including potentially young children, who had the misfortune to enter the building that morning.

It is easy to imagine the shock, distress and disgust they would have felt. The witness statements I have read bear testimony to the serious impact of your actions. But the harm you caused goes further. Others in the local community and beyond would also have been affected when news of this incident spread, prompting profound alarm, fear and insecurity.

In sentencing you I cannot ignore the context in which the offence was committed. For several months protests had been taking place outside the community centre. The police have been involved and as a result there are a number of cases currently before this court.

Whilst I do not suggest you were involved in any of those incidents, as a leading member of the so called Forgotten Estates Group you would have been keenly aware of the background and you would have appreciated better than most the likely effect of your actions in this wider context. It should have been obvious that what you did was intimidatory and would only serve to enflame an already tense and volatile situation. There was a real risk that your behaviour could either prompt others to exact retribution or encourage others to behave in a similar way.

It is not disputed that initially you were seen by the police as a reliable point of contact and in their words a “calming influence”. I accept that you disassociated yourself from the Forgotten Estates Group because you were concerned that it was being hijacked by others with more sinister motives.

I take account of the fact that you are a young man of previous good character. You have never been in any trouble with the police before. The character references I have read do you great credit. You regularly give your time, energy and money to good causes and to helping others.

I also accept that you have demonstrated genuine remorse and regret for your actions. You cooperated with the police and pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity.

I have read the pre sentence report prepared by the Probation service and noted their recommendations.

Weighing up all these factors and applying the Sentencing Guidelines I conclude that this offence is so serious that only a custodial sentence is justified. Were it not for the element of religious aggravation a community penalty would be appropriate. But this is an offence where the targeting of a particular religious group is the most serious factor and consequently a custodial sentence is inevitable.

However in view of your considerable personal mitigation and the fact that you are highly unlikely to appear before a criminal court again, I will suspend the sentence.

I have reduced the sentence by one third to reflect your guilty plea. The sentence I impose is 12 weeks imprisonment suspended for the period of 12 months. There will be one community requirement attached to the order, namely that you will undertake 250 hours of unpaid work.

You will also pay costs of £85.