



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**R v Naeem Mehmood**

**Sheffield Crown Court**

**21 February 2014**

**Sentencing remarks of Mr Justice Males**

Naeem Mehmood, you have pleaded guilty to the murder of Parvaiz Iqbal and to causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Saied Husseine.

Your first victim, Parvaiz Iqbal, was a 40 year old man who, with his brother Shafaq, was the joint owner the Bismallah Food Store, a small supermarket and Halal meat shop serving the Eastwood area of Rotherham. He was a friendly and popular member of the community who was well liked and respected by his employees, his customers and all who knew him, as shown by the very large number of people who attended his funeral. You yourself have described him, in a letter which your counsel read today, as “a very good man” and it appears from the material before me that that is exactly what he was.

His brother Shafaq Iqbal has provided a victim statement in which he speaks on behalf of all those, including Parvais’s wife and three sons, who wanted to speak of the effect which Parvaiz Iqbal’s death has had upon them. He speaks, not surprisingly, of the pain and suffering felt by those who knew and loved Parvaiz and how they are having difficulty coming to terms with the premature and violent death of the head of their family. He feels they have a life of grieving ahead of them and speaks too of the way in which their strong faith is helping them all through this time.

Your second victim, Saied Husseine, was aged 44 and was an assistant at the store. He too has provided a statement describing the pain which he still suffers, both day and night, and saying that the doctors can give him no assurance as to when this pain will ease. In addition to the physical effects of your attack upon him he reports that he suffers from nightmares as a result of it.

Although nothing I do or say can take away the grief of Parvais Iqbal's family or the pain suffered by Saied Husseine, I have taken both these statements into account.

You are now aged 27, with no previous convictions. You came to this country from Pakistan in May 2011 and in about June 2013 obtained work at the Bismallah Food Store in Rotherham, a small supermarket and Halal meat shop jointly owned by Mr Iqbal and his brother Shafaq. From 4 August you were absent from work as a result of having severed the top of your right index finger in a cutting machine whilst working in the store, but you returned to work on 14 October and were welcomed back by Mr Iqbal, who arranged for you to be given a lift home at the end of the day. Although you were later to complain about your treatment by Mr Iqbal, I can see no valid basis for any such complaint and it is clear not only that there was little or no difficulty between you when you returned to work but also that on the following day, 15 October, all those employed within the store were in good spirits because of the commencement of the Eid celebrations.

It was on that day, however, at about 2 pm, that you killed Mr Iqbal in a savage and unprovoked attack in the walk-in freezer section of the Bismallah store. You followed him into the freezer section, taking a knife with you, determined to kill him. He was unarmed and defenceless. You stabbed him a total of 51 times, beginning with a stab in the back. When interviewed by the police you claimed that you had acted in self defence, but that contention was nonsense and was quickly abandoned. In all you stabbed Mr Iqbal five times to the back of his body, 19 times to the head and neck, and 20 times to the front of his torso. There were in addition multiple injuries to his arms and hands as he tried unsuccessfully to defend himself. You continued to stab him after he collapsed to the ground. Many of the stab wounds on Mr Iqbal's body, head and neck penetrated deeply. The force with which you inflicted these injuries was so severe that several of his ribs were fractured and major damage was caused to his heart, lungs and other vital internal organs.

At some point while this was going on Mr Husseine, an assistant at the store whom you had met for the first time the day before, heard a moaning noise from the freezer section. It is apparent, therefore, that Mr Iqbal was still conscious, and no doubt in great pain. Mr Husseine opened the door and saw Mr Iqbal on the floor covered in blood and you standing over him. He asked what the problem was and you shouted at him to get out. You then ran forward and stabbed him to

the stomach, cutting an artery. Mr Hussein managed to escape from the freezer area and shouted at others to call the emergency services.

You turned back to continue your attack on Mr Iqbal. Your final blow struck Mr Iqbal's chest with such force that you were unable to remove the knife from his body. The blade, which was 18cm long, was plunged in almost to the hilt. The whole episode last for a minute and a half.

As you left the store you picked up another large knife, a meat cleaver, from the meat preparation area. It was described by some witnesses as a machete and was 25.5 cm in length. You smashed glass counters within the store, holding the knife above your head in both hands and bringing it down with considerable force. You were shouting and swearing in front of customers and youngsters within the store, causing them to fear for their lives. Still armed, and with Mr Iqbal's blood on your arms and hands, you left the store and made your way up Grosvenor Road, smashing the windows of seven vehicles on your way and terrifying the members of the public who saw you. You smashed the front window of a barber's shop on Fitzwilliam Road showering customers with glass. You brandished your knife at the proprietor and threatened to kill him. You made similar bloodthirsty threats to others while holding the knife. You made your way to the car park of a nearby Tesco store as the police arrived. Chief Inspector Ian Wormesley saw you still in possession of the knife, but at risk to his own life ran towards you and instructed you to drop it. You complied and were arrested.

This was a brutal, sustained and unprovoked attack, beginning with a cowardly stab in the back with a lethal weapon. It involved a degree of premeditation on your part as you took the knife into the freezer area of the store intending to use it to kill Mr Iqbal. It was very nearly a double murder as the injury to Mr Hussein was life threatening and it was only the skill of the doctors who operated on him which saved his life. The aftermath, as you left the store and rampaged down the road in broad daylight for about ten minutes leaving a trail of destruction behind you, caused real and understandable fear to many members to the public. Why you acted as you did is not apparent. It may be that you were reacting to what you perceived, with no justification at all, as some kind of slight or that you harboured some kind of grudge. But in any event there is not the slightest excuse for what you did.

The question might arise whether someone who acted in this barbaric way was suffering from some mental disorder or disability, but you have no history of mental illness and the medical

experts who examined you after your arrest and have examined you since have found no evidence of any mental difficulties which might explain your conduct.

The sentence for murder is fixed by law and is a sentence of imprisonment for life, but I must also set the minimum term which you must serve before you can be considered for release on licence. I emphasise that this is a minimum term. It does not mean that you will be released after that time. Whether or when you will be released will be for the Parole Board to determine. You will only be released if the Board is satisfied that you can be released without risk to public safety and, in any event, once you are released you will remain on licence for the rest of your life and liable to recall if you offend again or breach the terms of your licence. It is apparent from your conduct in this case that you are a very dangerous man and present a considerable risk to public safety. But the minimum term which I have to set is not concerned with that, but only with the appropriate punishment for what you have done.

All murder is very serious, but the seriousness of this offence was particularly high. It involved a savage and ferocious attack with a lethal weapon, premeditation and gratuitous violence continuing well after Mr Iqbal was bleeding to death on the floor. There was also a deliberate and murderous attack on Mr Hussein which could very easily have caused his death. Your conduct as you left the store and proceeded along the road, terrifying and threatening innocent members of the public as you went, was a serious aggravating factor.

I consider that the appropriate starting point for this offence, taking account of all these circumstances, is a minimum term of the order of 30 years, although any starting point is subject to adjustment to take account of the particular circumstances of the case. In reaching this figure I have taken account of the aggravating factors which I have mentioned.

Your counsel has submitted that the correct starting point for the minimum term should be 25 years, on the basis that you took a knife to the scene. In my judgment it makes little or no difference whether this is a case where the aggravating features make a 30 year starting point appropriate or whether it should be a starting point of 25 years aggravated by the frenzied nature of your attack on Mr Iqbal which was premeditated, your attack on Mr Hussein, and your subsequent conduct in the shop and in the street. For the reasons I have given, however, I propose to take a starting point of 30 years and to reduce it by such mitigation as there is.

As to mitigation, there are some mitigating factors in your case, but they do not amount to much. You have pleaded guilty, and I give you some credit for that, but there was never any doubt that you killed Mr Iqbal and once the possibility of any defence based on your mental state was ruled out, the eventual outcome of the case was inevitable. You have no previous convictions or history of violence, which is to some extent a point in your favour, and you did eventually drop the knife when instructed by the police to do so rather than cause still worse mayhem. But this was only after the death, injury and damage which you had already caused.

Taking these matters into account, I conclude that the appropriate minimum term which you must serve is 27 years less the time that you have spent on remand in custody.

I must also sentence you for the injury which you inflicted on Mr Hussein. This is an offence which clearly falls into the most serious category of its kind, involving (as will be obvious from what I have already said) life threatening injury and high culpability. It is unnecessary to rehearse again the aggravating features of this case. After giving credit for your guilty plea the sentence on this count will be 10 years, concurrent with the sentence passed on count 1.

The sentence which I pass on you on count 1 is life imprisonment with a minimum term of 27 years less the time that you have spent on remand in custody. On count 3 the sentence is 10 years concurrent. The statutory surcharge provisions will apply.

You may go down.

Finally, I have mentioned already the conduct of Chief Inspector Ian Wormesley who put his own life at risk in tackling this defendant who was still in possession of a knife or meat cleaver and had demonstrated that he was prepared to use it to kill or wound. I would like to commend his bravery, presence of mind and devotion to duty which enabled the arrest to take place without more violence and suffering to innocent people of a highly dangerous man who posed a considerable threat to both members of the public and other police officers.