



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

IN THE CROWN COURT AT MAIDSTONE

REGINA – JACK RALPH

Sentencing Remarks of Mrs Justice Cheema-Grubb DBE

Jack Ralph. You are 28 years of age and for the past few years have been subject to emerging paranoid schizophrenia. The full history of your symptoms has been set out in the many psychiatric reports prepared for this trial. Despite inpatient treatment in 2017 and anti-psychotic medication which you may well not have been complying with by the autumn of 2018, your illness developed.

By September last year you were very seriously ill. That is the explanation for what you did early on the morning of 29th September last year. As David Harris, your neighbour described, you went to the door of his home, and knocked. When he opened it, he realised immediately that there was something wrong with you. You pulled a big kitchen knife out from behind your back and although he and his daughter Sharon tried to close the door, you were able to stab at him causing two near fatal wounds to his neck from which he soon collapsed. The jury has convicted you of attempted murder.

You went on to stab Sharon, his adult daughter in the chest. Sharon's mother, David's wife Margaret, who was in her 70s rushed down the stairs to see what was happening. You stabbed her in her neck and her chest. Those two women died at the scene, their hearts having stopped from the massive blood loss caused by your violence. Each of them knowing that you had killed, or almost certainly killed, another member of their family. You have been convicted of manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility.

David Harris clung on to life and survived despite suffering a heart attack and requiring surgery. After you had all but destroyed his life

you went back home next door, took of a blood-stained top, placed the large knife you had used on the kitchen counter and made a phone call attempting to cancel insurance on your car. You knew the police would be coming, indeed you had heard David Harris making a desperate 999 call while you were still in his home. You then sat down on the sofa in your mother's house and when the officers arrived to arrest you, you put up your hands in surrender.

David Harris's physical survival is but part of the picture. The devastation you wrought on that innocent family will be a legacy he has to face every day. He has not been able to make any impact statement when invited to do so. He has not come to court, he has not been able to do it. His absence in word and body speaks eloquently of the unnatural horror of what you did and the endless suffering he and all Margaret and Sharon's loved ones endure.

I now have the duty of sentencing you. I am sure on clear, undisputed evidence that when you killed Margaret and Sharon Harris you were in the grip of a profound psychiatric illness. Paranoid Schizophrenia is a chronic mental disorder which caused you to lose touch with reality. You had fundamental and characteristic distortions of thinking and perception dominated by persecutory delusions accompanied by auditory hallucinations. Four consultant forensic psychiatrists agree that you were so affected by that condition that your ability to understand the nature of your conduct, form a rational judgment or exercise self-control was substantially impaired. This illness and its result is the explanation for what you did to the Harris family.

I heard oral evidence from Dr Joseph as to what would be the appropriate sentence should the jury reject the defence of insanity and return the verdicts of manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility and guilty of attempted murder that they have. He confirmed the written evidence on disposal contained in his report dated 30th January 2019. In essence you continue to suffer from a mental disorder of a nature and degree which makes it appropriate for you to be detained in a psychiatric hospital under provisions of the Mental Health Act 1983. His view is that your culpability, your blameworthiness, is low because your offending is entirely attributable to your mental illness. A therapeutic regime is available for you at Broadmoor Hospital where you are being kept safe and treated. The plans for your future will be assessed by those responsible clinicians. In a case as grave as this one the court cannot contemplate a bare hospital order under s.37 of the Mental Health Act. Dr Joseph

recognised this as do those who represent you. The power available to this court to restrict your release arises under s.41 of the Act. Such a restriction order deals with the significant risk of serious harm that you present to the public were you to be set free while you remain seriously ill, as at present.

Dr Joseph's oral evidence to me also included the opinion that your culpability was clearly at the insane end of the scale. This is important evidence because it means that the purposes of sentencing in your case, including protecting the public, do not fit the requirements of a s.45A Hospital and Limitation Order. The prosecution does not suggest that it does.

I have reminded myself of the important penal element in most sentencing decisions. This is a case in which there is no doubt that the merciless killing of Margaret and Sharon Harris and the attempted murder of David Harris were the result of your paranoid schizophrenia. It is likely, in my judgment that you were not complying with your medication. You told one psychiatrist that you were entirely non-compliant although you told others that you were taking some of the anti-psychotic, but not regularly as required. In the circumstances I do not find that to be a culpable omission because I accept the evidence that your psychosis was developing and had been substantially submerged for some time, probably years.

I have also seen today a further report dated 18th March 2019 from Dr Sengupta who is responsible for your treatment and care at Broadmoor. He agrees with Dr Joseph and confirms that a bed is available today for you to return to the maximum security conditions in which you have been kept there.

Both of those doctors are approved by the Secretary of State under s.12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983.

I make an order under s.37 of the Mental Health Act 1983 that you be detained and treated at a high security hospital, namely Broadmoor. This is because it is the most suitable step this court can take and you are suffering from a mental disorder, namely paranoid schizophrenia which is of a nature which makes it appropriate for you to be detained in a hospital for medical treatment; and appropriate medical treatment is available for you there.

I have also considered whether this order should be subject to special restrictions specified in section 41 of the Act. Having heard the evidence of Dr. Joseph I am satisfied that because of the nature of your offences and also having regard to your past (including your history of mental illness) and to the risk that you will commit further offences if you are not detained, it is necessary to protect the public from serious harm and it is not possible to say for how long that will be so.

Accordingly, I order that you will be subject to the special restrictions set out in section 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983, without limit of time.

That is the sentence I pass on each count.

19th March 2019