



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

IN THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT

R - V - SAUD

SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE BEAN

20 OCTOBER 2010

Saud bin Abdulaziz bin Nasir al Saud, soon after arriving at the Landmark Hotel in London with your servant Bandar Abdulaziz last January you launched a brutal assault on him in the hotel lift. This caused his right ear to swell to three times its normal size. Fortunately for the interests of justice, this episode was captured on CCTV. The most chilling aspect of that footage is that your victim did not resist at all. He was so completely subservient to you that after being treated as a human punchbag he followed you meekly out of the lift. Whether you continued the attack in the bedroom is not clear.

Both of you remained in the room for two days. If you had had any remorse for what you had done, you would have summoned medical assistance or taken him to hospital. In fact he only went to hospital a week later when a doctor insisted on it. The injuries were so severe that they were beyond medical treatment.

There is CCTV footage of an assault in the lift on another occasion. That was less serious, and has not been separately charged. But it is further evidence of this having been a violent and abusive relationship over a period of weeks if not longer.

On 15 February you attacked Bandar again, in your bedroom. This time you killed him. He had bleeding in the brain, a fractured larynx, bruising in the abdomen and other injuries. You had hit him in so many places that the pathologists cannot say for certain which injury caused his death.

I consider that the evidence points to your having killed him between 0140 and 0240 in the morning of 15 February. Again, if you had had any remorse you would have sought medical help immediately. But you were only concerned for yourself. You spent most of the next 12 hours on the phone, working out your options. It was only when you summoned your driver and adviser that he insisted on calling reception. You told a pack of lies to the ambulance service and to the police. You did not even admit that you were the person who killed Bandar until a week and a half before the trial. To this day you have not explained why you killed him.

It is very unusual for a prince to be in the dock on a murder charge. But your trial has proceeded in just the same way as anyone else's would in this court. No one in this country is above the law. It would be wrong for me to sentence you either more severely or more leniently because of your membership of the royal family in Saudi Arabia.

The sentence for murder is, as it must be, life imprisonment.

I turn to consider the minimum term you must serve before you can be considered for release. I have regard to the provisions of Schedule 21 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

I have considered whether this was "a murder involving sexual or sadistic conduct" within paragraph 5(2)(e) of the Schedule. I have been referred to the case of Bonellie. I consider that in using these words Parliament intended to refer firstly to cases where the murder itself involved some sexual indignity to the victim, and secondly to cases where the murderer took pleasure in the calculated infliction of pain in the course of the killing. I am not persuaded of either of these matters. The starting point is therefore a minimum term of 15 years rather than 30.

As for mitigating factors, your previous good character is of little consequence in a case of this kind. I accept that the murder was not planned or premeditated. I cannot be sure that you intended to kill your victim: I think the most likely explanation is that you could not care less whether you killed him or not.

On the other hand there are significant aggravating factors. You killed Bandar in the course of a sustained and ferocious assault. You were in a position of domination over him, as demonstrated both by the lift incident and by the sexually explicit photographs you took of him, at some point prior to 15 February, which were found on your mobile phone. Bandar was a vulnerable victim, entirely subjugated to your will. You were in a position of authority and trust over him which you exploited ruthlessly. Whether or not your relationship with him had involved sexual intercourse as well makes no difference to sentence in this case.

I also take into account in setting the minimum term the fact of your conviction for the earlier episode of causing grievous bodily harm with intent. I have regard to the sentencing guidelines for offences of that type, and also to the principle of totality.

The result is that the appropriate minimum term is 20 years from when you were first remanded in custody. Since you have already spent 243 days on remand the formal order of the court will specify a minimum term of 19 years and 122 days from today. I emphasise that this is a minimum term. It means that only in the year 2030 will the Parole Board be able to consider for the first time whether it is safe to release you. There will be a concurrent sentence on count 2 of 9 years' imprisonment which makes no difference to the overall result. I adjourn the prosecution application for costs until Friday.