

# Parole Board Decision Summary

Name: Charles Salvador  
Decision: No direction for release on parole licence and no recommendation for transfer to an open prison

## INTRODUCTION

As required by law, Mr Salvador's case was referred to the Parole Board by the Secretary of State for Justice to determine whether he could be safely released on parole licence. If not, the panel should consider whether transfer to open conditions could be recommended.

The panel could only direct release if it was satisfied that it was no longer necessary for the protection of the public that Mr Salvador remained confined in prison.

If the panel did not find that Mr Salvador could be released, it should consider his suitability for transfer to open conditions. To do so, the panel must review the extent to which he has made sufficient progress in reducing risk in order to protect the public from harm, given that a prisoner in open prison may be unsupervised in the community and taking temporary releases under licence. The panel must also be satisfied that Mr Salvador is unlikely to abscond from an open prison, and that a move to an open prison is an essential part of Mr Salvador's rehabilitation and to prepare for a possible release on license into the community. The Secretary of State will only accept a recommendation for transfer to open conditions where these conditions are met and where a move would not undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system.

The case was considered at oral hearings on 6 March 2023, 8 March 2023 and 10 March 2023. The hearings on 6 March 2023 and 8 March 2023 took place in person at the prison and were heard in public. This followed a change in the Parole Board rules. The hearing on 10 March 2023 took place via a video link and was not heard in public so that sensitive matters could be discussed. Mr Salvador indicated that he hoped to be released as a result of the Parole Board review or, in the alternative, be recommended for a move to an open prison. Prior to concluding its review, the panel received and considered further written representations from Mr Salvador's legal representative and the Secretary of State's legal representative. The Secretary of State did not believe that Mr Salvador should be released or that he should be transferred to an open prison.

In reaching its decision, the panel considered the contents of Mr Salvador's dossier, prepared by the Secretary of State. At the hearings, the panel took oral evidence from Mr Salvador's probation officer based in the community, the official supervising his case in prison, a psychologist employed by the prison service, a psychologist commissioned by Mr Salvador's legal representative, Mr Salvador's personal officer in the prison and from Mr Salvador's friend in the community. Mr Salvador, who was legally represented at the hearing, also gave evidence to the panel. The Secretary of State's legal representative was party to the proceedings and also asked questions of witnesses.



The panel had the benefit of a statement from a victim of an earlier offence committed by Mr Salvador in custody. The contents were considered carefully by the panel.

### SENTENCE DETAILS

On 17 February 2000, Mr Salvador received a discretionary life sentence following his conviction for false imprisonment (the index offence). He was 47 years old at the time he was sentenced and was aged 70 when his case was reviewed.

This was Mr Salvador's 8th review by the Parole Board following the end of the initial minimum period, set by the court on appeal, which expired in February 2003. The Parole Board's regular reviews have meant that Mr Salvador has so far spent an additional 20 years in prison for the protection of the public.

At the public hearing, the panel set out the background to Mr Salvador's offending. He was lightly convicted until 1974, when at the age of 21, he received a total sentence of 7 years in prison for offences of robbery, aggravated burglary, assault with intent to rob and possession of a firearm.

During that sentence, Mr Salvador started what became a pattern of serious violence in prison. He received a consecutive custodial sentence in 1975 for a serious assault against another prisoner. In 1978, he was sentenced for a further violent offence. In 1985, Mr Salvador was sentenced to three years in custody for a serious violence offence and was subsequently released into the community in 1987 for the first time since 1974.

Within months he had committed a robbery and was sentenced, in 1988, to seven years in prison. After his release on that sentence, Mr Salvador was in the community for 69 days before being remanded into custody in 1992 for an offence of carrying a firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence. He has remained continuously in prison since then and received an 8 year sentence for the firearms offence in 1993.

In 1994, Mr Salvador received a 7 year custodial sentence for offences of false imprisonment, blackmail, threats to kill, assault occasioning actual bodily harm and criminal damage. These offences were committed in prison. In 1997, Mr Salvador received a further 5 year sentence for offences of false imprisonment, blackmail and threats to kill. He then went on to commit the index offence in 1999.

### RISK ASSESSMENT

Having considered the index offence, relevant patterns of previous offending and behaviour, and the other evidence before it, the panel identified as 'risk factors' those influences which made it more likely that Mr Salvador would reoffend. At the time of his offending, these risk factors had included him thinking that it was acceptable to commit crime and his violent lifestyle. The panel carefully considered his personality traits, his tendency to minimise responsibility for his actions, his self-image and his need for status. Mr Salvador had demonstrated callous behaviour and limited victim empathy. He has struggled to manage



3rd Floor, 10 South Colonnade, London E14 4PU



[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board)



[info@paroleboard.gov.uk](mailto:info@paroleboard.gov.uk)



[@Parole\\_Board](https://twitter.com/Parole_Board)



0203 880 0885



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE | Bronze

extreme emotions and control his behaviour, overreacting to events and bearing grudges. The panel noted that Mr Salvador enjoyed the excitement, notoriety and the financial rewards of his violent and criminal lifestyle.

Evidence was presented at the hearings regarding Mr Salvador's progress and custodial conduct during this sentence. Since his sentence for the index offence, Mr Salvador had committed further acts of violence in prison. His last conviction for a violent offence was in 2014 when he was sentenced for an assault.

Due to his behaviour, much of Mr Salvador's sentence has been spent in segregation, in conditions of high security. He had achieved notoriety under the name 'Charles Bronson' and had been dubbed by some media reports as 'Britain's most violent prisoner'. It was not until 2010 that Mr Salvador showed any inclination to address identified risk factors and he engaged in specialist work with a psychologist. This work was completed in 2012 but Mr Salvador went on to further offend in 2014. Mr Salvador told the panel that the specialist work had been helpful but he also told the panel that it had been of little benefit. The work had focussed on how to progress Mr Salvador in his sentence and had not explored the full range of risks associated with his use of violence.

It was after this further offence that Mr Salvador changed his name from Bronson to Salvador which he told the panel means 'man of peace' in South America. He was clear that it was not a tribute to Salvador Dali as mentioned in various written reports. He told the panel that as a man of peace he is now anti-crime and anti-violence. He spends many hours on his artwork and on exercise.

The prison psychologist had identified that Mr Salvador's violence and criminal behaviour in the community had brought him notoriety, power and excitement, and that imprisonment had stripped him of this. It was indicated that during much of his sentence Mr Salvador had seen actions against the prison system as a way of taking back power and gaining excitement.

Mr Salvador had considered himself to be a 'retired prison activist', a label coined during his interview with the psychologist instructed by his legal representative. He had enjoyed his protests and causing damage to prison property which the panel considered to be a minimisation of the seriousness of his offending. However, the panel noted that Mr Salvador had changed in recent years and had sought to address his more recent grievances within the prison system through legal channels. The panel was also mindful that Mr Salvador still considered it acceptable to break some prison rules if he felt he was justified in doing so. He continues to hold entrenched anti-authority beliefs that have the ability to undermine his stability.

In November 2017, it was alleged that Mr Salvador had assaulted a prison governor. He was charged with the assault and was later acquitted at trial in July 2018. It is reported that this was an important milestone because Mr Salvador realised that had he been convicted it was very likely he would die in prison. He has said that he is now very aware of the consequences of his actions and is terrified of dying in prison.



There was evidence in 2018 of Mr Salvador using and threatening violence to resolve problems to manage negative emotions and to deal with grievances. This included greasing himself with margarine to fight staff and needing to be restrained. He was reported to have attempted to assault a prison governor and assaulted a prison officer. In his evidence to the panel, Mr Salvador admitted to being violent in 2018, saying that he had a 'rumble' with prison officers on three occasions, which he described as 'brilliant'. These were the last incidents of physical violence, although reports from the prison have indicated that there have been incidents of veiled threats in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The panel was not persuaded that Mr Salvador's evidence demonstrated much insight into his own understanding of the risk factors that led to his behaviour.

Mr Salvador has been in his current prison since 2019. He is held in secure conditions which he feels are better than those he has experienced in the past and that he is treated with kindness. The panel noted that there had been a prolonged period of improved behaviour and that Mr Salvador had been working with professionals. He has been engaging with specialist work with a psychologist, although Mr Salvador told the panel that he had not learnt much from the sessions.

Due to staff shortages, Mr Salvador spends 23 hours a day in his cell and chooses to spend the time out of his cell in the gym or the exercise yard. Typically he will speak to other prisoners in his association group for about ten minutes a day. He is allowed to associate with three prisoners and dislikes one of them. He has told the prisoner that he dislikes that he will not be talking to him and they co-exist without bothering each other. The panel considered the limited time out of his cell has offered little opportunity for Mr Salvador's ability to manage himself in conflict situations to be tested.

The panel noted that Mr Salvador lives by his own rules and code of conduct and that he judges others to his own standards. Set against this, there has been evidence of Mr Salvador breaking prison rules which he considered to be 'petty' and 'minor' and that get in the way of him achieving his aims and doing what he wants to do. There have also been a number of occasional verbal outbursts reported. The panel considered Mr Salvador to have unrealistic expectations of others and this, combined with his willingness to flagrantly breach prison rules, have significant implications for his behaviour and are linked to risk and his likely compliance with those conditions that could be put in place to manage his risk. In the panel's view, Mr Salvador's ability to manage himself safely in a less controlled environment where his expectations are challenged, or are not met, is yet to be tested.

Most witnesses at the oral hearing did not recommend Mr Salvador's release or his progression to an open prison. The panel was told that the current sentence plan was for Mr Salvador to move to another prison where he can show how he manages himself in a more open unit with less restrictions on his behaviour.

The psychologist instructed by Mr Salvador's legal representative had not recommended release in her written report. In her evidence at the oral hearing, the psychologist's view fluctuated as she was questioned and it variously ranged



from progression in a closed prison, progression to an open prison and potential release. Her final preference was for Mr Salvador to be moved to an open prison.

In this case, factors which would reduce the risk of reoffending were identified as Mr Salvador's sense of hope for the future and his commitment to progression. The panel noted that he has realistic long-term goals that are providing him with a focus. His artwork is now a central part of his life that was not previously present when he was offending in the community. This has increased his self-esteem and provides a potential opportunity for him to secure a legitimate income to fund his lifestyle upon release.

The panel examined the release plan provided by Mr Salvador's probation officer and weighed its proposals against the risks they had assessed. The plan included a requirement to reside in designated accommodation as well as strict limitations on Mr Salvador's contacts, movements and activities. Mr Salvador also set out his own plans for the future.

The panel concluded the release plan would be robust because it would provide a strict set of external controls. However, the panel was concerned that Mr Salvador has not yet developed the necessary internal controls that he could use to safely manage his risk of future violence. The panel determined that in the absence of those internal controls, the external controls of the risk management plan would be unlikely to be sufficient to manage Mr Salvador's level of risk.

The panel noted that he is presently in a highly restricted environment and his general attitude towards compliance is yet to be tested in conditions of less security. Consequently, the panel did not consider the release plan to be sufficient at this stage in managing Mr Salvador safely in the community.

### DECISION

After considering the circumstances of his offending, the progress that Mr Salvador has made while in custody and the evidence presented at the hearings, the panel was not satisfied that Mr Salvador was suitable for release. Nor did the panel recommend to the Secretary of State that he should be transferred to an open prison.

The panel noted that Mr Salvador has spent most of the last 48 years in custody and that much of this time has been in conditions of segregation. The panel accepted that Mr Salvador genuinely wants to progress and that he is motivated to work towards his release. It thought that there was evidence of improved self-control and better emotional management.

However, the panel was mindful of his history of persistent rule breaking and that Mr Salvador sees little wrong with this. He lives his life rigidly by his own rules and code of conduct and is quick to judge others by his own standards. His positive progress has to be assessed in the context of him being held in a highly restrictive environment. In the panel's view, it is unknown exactly what is containing Mr Salvador's risk. It is unclear whether the strong external controls of custody are mainly responsible or whether his attitudes have genuinely changed.



The panel could not be satisfied that Mr Salvador has the skills to manage his risk of future violence until he has been extensively tested outside of his current highly restricted environment. The movement and categorisation of prisoners are entirely a matter for the Secretary of State, and parole panels will not ordinarily comment on such matters. However in the particular circumstances of this case the panel observed that there is an identified pathway for Salvador in custody and the evidence supported such a move within a closed prison.

In the panel's view, this is a pivotal point in Mr Salvador's sentence when his motivation to desist from violence is at its highest. Both psychologists instructed by Mr Salvador's legal representative were unequivocal in their view that he no longer requires the secure placement in his current prison. He will be eligible for another parole review in due course.



3rd Floor, 10 South Colonnade, London E14 4PU



[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board)



[info@paroleboard.gov.uk](mailto:info@paroleboard.gov.uk)



[@Parole\\_Board](https://twitter.com/Parole_Board)



0203 880 0885



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE | Bronze