

Parole Board Decision Summary

the
Parole
Board

Name: Abdalraouf Abdallah

Decision: No direction for re-release on parole licence

working with others
to protect the public

INTRODUCTION

As required by law, Mr Abdallah'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 after his recall to custody in January 2021. As Mr Abdallah is an extended determinate sentenced prisoner, the Parole Board is not asked to make any recommendation in relation to a move to open conditions in the absence of a direction for release.

The panel could only direct release if it was satisfied that it was no longer necessary for the protection of the public that Mr Abdallah remained confined in prison. The panel in this instance comprising four specially trained members who deal with cases that involve offences related to terrorism and extremism. The panel comprised a judicial member, an independent member, a psychologist member and a psychiatrist member.

The case was considered at an oral hearing which took place over four days on 8 and 9 April 2024, 1 July 2024 and 31 July 2024. The hearing days on 8 and 9 April 2024 were conducted at the prison where Mr Abdallah is held. Hearings on 1 and 31 July 2024 were held remotely by video-links with all participants. Mr Abdallah indicated through his legal representative that he hoped to be released as a result of the Parole Board review.

In reaching its decision the panel considered the contents of Mr Abdallah's dossier prepared by the Secretary of State. This included up-to-date reports from Mr Abdallah's probation officer based in the community, reports by psychologists instructed both by the prison and Mr Abdallah, and other assessments and documentation from the establishment. It also included 'closed' material to which Mr Abdallah was not privy and which had been withheld following a successful non-disclosure application.

At the hearing, the panel took oral evidence from Mr Abdallah's probation officer based in the community, the official supervising his case in prison, a psychologist employed by the prison service and a psychologist commissioned by Mr Abdallah's legal representative.

Mr Abdallah, who was legally represented at the hearing by Counsel and a solicitor, also gave evidence to the panel. The Secretaries of State were represented by Counsel and by two lay representatives. The Secretary of State was party to the proceedings and their Counsel also asked questions of witnesses. Counsel provided representations on behalf of the Secretary of State and opposed re-release. Mr Abdallah's interests in relation to the closed material were represented by a Special Advocate.



SENTENCE DETAILS

On 15 July 2016, Mr Abdallah received an extended determinate sentence of nine years six months comprised of a five-year six-month custodial element and four years' extended licence following conviction for engaging in conduct for preparation for terrorist act. He received a two-year determinate sentence to run concurrently for being concerned in an arrangement whereby money/property was made available to another for the purpose of terrorism. He was 23 years old at the time he was sentenced and was aged 31 when his parole review was concluded.

The circumstances of the index offence are, in summary, that in July 2014 when he was aged 21, Mr Abdallah took steps to assist his brother and three other men in their travel to Syria, including making attempts to liaise with a known source of firearms, acting as a facilitator, offering advice and guidance and transferring money for his brother's use.

Mr Abdallah was not released at his Parole Eligibility Date in January 2019. He was released at the automatic release point in his sentence as is required by the law on 26 November 2020. His licence was revoked, and he was recalled to custody on 18 January 2021 as a result of verbal threats he made to have another resident in his accommodation harmed. The threat was deemed credible and followed an earlier physical assault on a female employee at his accommodation and finds of a Class C substance in his room. Mr Abdallah did not dispute the circumstances of recall although he minimised the significance of his conduct in his oral evidence to the panel. Given the circumstances, the panel found the decision to recall him to custody had been appropriate.

This was Mr Abdallah's first review by the Parole Board.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Having considered the index offences and the other evidence before it, the panel listed as risk factors those influences which made it more likely that Mr Abdallah would reoffend.

At the time of his offending these risk factors had included an extremist mindset and a desire to radicalise others and to impose his ideology on others. The panel accepted the finding of the Manchester Arena Public Inquiry that Mr Abdallah had played a significant role in radicalising the Manchester Arena bomber although there was no evidence that he was involved in the attack itself or had any pre-knowledge of it.

Evidence was presented at the hearing and in the dossier regarding Mr Abdallah's progress and custodial conduct during this sentence and since his recall.

Prior to his initial release he had undertaken an accredited programme intended to address the motivations behind his offending behaviour and the beliefs which enable it. He also undertook a one-to-one rehabilitative support programme specifically intended to manage the risk of individuals who have been involved in extremist or terrorism related activity.



The panel heard how Mr Abdallah had demonstrated application of relevant skills and learning while in custody. Mr Abdallah's community-based probation officer and prison-based officer both agreed that Mr Abdallah had no further core risk reduction work to be undertaken in custody but neither supported his release. Nor did the prison-instructed psychologist. This was on the basis that the proposed release and risk management plan and licence conditions would not be sufficient to manage the risk he posed and/or that the interventions he had completed had not sufficiently reduced the risk he posed.

The panel heard that Mr Abdallah was assessed as posing a high risk of serious harm to the public, to children and to staff, meaning that there are indicators of serious harm, and the potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious. The panel accepted these assessments.

Assessments completed by psychologists instructed by the prison on seven occasions over the course of Mr Abdallah's sentence, were provided to the panel. The two most recent assessments concluded that Mr Abdallah continued to present a moderate level of engagement with extremism, a moderate level of intent to engage in extremism or committing terrorist related offending and having some capability to commit further extremist or terrorist behaviour. Neither assessing prison-instructed psychologist (one of whom provided oral evidence to the panel) supported Mr Abdallah's release.

Mr Abdallah's instructed psychologist disagreed with the findings, however there were shortcomings identified by the panel in their approach to the assessment and the panel felt unable to place any significant weight on the psychologist's evidence.

In this case, protective factors which would reduce the risk of reoffending were not identified by the panel.

The panel examined the release plan provided by Mr Abdallah's probation officer and weighed its proposals against assessed risks. The plan included a requirement to reside in designated accommodation as well as strict limitations on Mr Abdallah's contacts, movements and activities.

The panel concluded this plan was not robust enough to manage Mr Abdallah in the community because it was satisfied that Mr Abdallah retained a propensity to radicalise others and because it could not be satisfied that there has been any genuine change in Mr Abdallah's extremist mindset or in his willingness to radicalise others. The panel considered that Mr Abdallah had not been open or frank with the panel as to his extremist mindset at the time of his offending which, it considered, demonstrated a concerning lack of insight into his risk. The panel did not find his evidence, either as to his mindset at the time of the index offence or since, plausible or credible. The panel concluded that Mr Abdallah retains an extremist mindset and continues to pose a risk of radicalising others, including those in any accommodation he is released to or any other person with whom he may come in contact.



DECISION

After considering the circumstances of his offending, the progress made while in custody and on licence, and the evidence presented at the hearing and in the dossier, the panel was not satisfied that release at this point would be safe for the protection of the public.

Given that key areas of risk remain active, the panel considered that Mr Abdallah was appropriately located in custody.

Mr Abdallah will be automatically released at his sentence end date in November 2024 as required by law without a further review by the Parole Board.

