

Sentencing delayed again for killers who hunted down new father

Family of knife victim tell of agony over brutal killing

by EMILY FINCH

THE family of a young father who was stabbed just yards from his mother's home spoke of their anguish following his death as the sentencing of his killers was delayed for a fourth time.

Dozens of family members and friends gathered at the Old Bailey on Monday to witness the sentencing of the three youths who were convicted of the murder of Nashon Esbrand. Supporters of the 27-year-old victim wore red T-shirts to commemorate his love for Manchester United football club.

Mr Esbrand was hunted down and killed in Mitchison Road, Canonbury, in August last year after he was chased by five youths on pushbikes down the Essex Road. At the end of a two-week long trial, a jury found Dillon Zambon, 20, Jhon Berhane, 18, and a 16-year-old who cannot be



Friends and family of Nashon Esbrand show their support by wearing T-shirts outside the Old Bailey

named because of his age, guilty of murder in March.

Mr Esbrand's mother, Princess, spoke of her deep grief following the brutal murder of her youngest son.

She said: "We were very, very close. I saw him four times every day.

"I spoke to him on the telephone every hour. Since Nashon's death, I just want to die so that I can be with him. This has left me feeling suicidal at times. It is only because of my other children that I have the strength to carry on and also because of Nashon's baby daughter."

She told the court that Mr Esbrand had essentially been her carer following a heart attack five years ago.

"Nashon used to drive me to medical appointments, collect my medication and do my shopping for me," she said. "He would basically do everything for me."

Less than two weeks before his death he had become the father of a baby girl, Milla, and had just visited his parents with his new baby and partner less than an hour before he was killed.

His sister, Melissa, who works as a teacher, spoke from the dock to describe the impact her brother's murder had on her life. She said she had been on holiday in Crete at the time of the stabbing and it was "too much" not to be able to say goodbye to Mr Esbrand. She also said she felt guilt for not being able to protect her youngest brother who was being targeted by gang members after they accused him of co-operating with the police.

"Since I returned from Crete I have spent no real quality time with my own children because I am grieving and just trying to get through every day," she added.

Mr Esbrand's older brother, Mark Barton, who works for a gangs unit, made a plea to young people to not carry knives in his victim impact statement which was read out in court.

He said: "Please think about the consequences, not just on the victim's family but on your own

family and maybe even one of your family could lose their life to knife crime."

He paid tribute to his brother, describing him as having a "pure and gentle soul" and said he "forgave" the three youths who were meant to be sentenced on Monday.

The sentencing was pushed back until Monday after the court was told one defendant, Dillon Zambon, was too ill to attend court.

Judge Anuja Dhir apologised to the gathered family but said it was "not in the interests of what's just and what's fair" to sentence him in his absence.

Speaking after the hearing, Mark said: "I'm just disappointed, again. We had a lot of family members here today. But hopefully, if he does turn around again and say he's ill, the judge will go ahead with the sentencing. I would rather just get it done."

The sentencing had already been delayed three times. The 16-year-old pleaded guilty to murder at the beginning of the trial. It was the teenager who plunged a "rambo-style" knife into Mr Esbrand's legs, cutting through a major artery.

One youth who was involved in the attack has not been identified through CCTV footage while another youth, named as Jack Stevens, remains "at large" according to the prosecution team.

Berhane and Zambon were found guilty of murder based on joint enterprise on March 26.



Jhon Berhane



Nashon Esbrand

Kidnap plot, just a day after attack

ONE of the youths convicted of killing Nashon Esbrand was involved in a kidnap plot where he beat and brandished a machete at another man the day after he played his part in murdering the new father, it was revealed in court on Monday, writes Emily Finch.

The long criminal history of Jhon Berhane, 18, from Islington, who was one of the five youths who hunted and killed Mr Esbrand just minutes after he said goodbye to his baby daughter, was read out at the Old Bailey before his planned sentencing next Monday.

Berhane was convicted for his part in the kidnap and false imprisonment of a man from Whitechapel on February 25 at Wood Green Crown Court. The 12-hour kidnap ordeal for the victim started on August 25 – the same day Mr Esbrand (right) was declared dead by doctors who battled to save his life.

Prosecuting barrister Hugh Davies QC said: "Berhane must have known of the death of Mr Esbrand on 25th August."

He described the second violent incident Berhane was involved in: "A man was set upon by four youths. He was punched and kicked,

bungled into the back of a Renault Clio. Large knives were used on him – a Rambo knife and a machete."

He added: "He was held for 12 hours before he managed to escape. He ran and three of the group chased him into a café. They were only able to prevent recapture as members of the public intervened."

According to Mr Davies the youths called the victim's friend and demanded a ransom for his release.

Mr Davies said: "On the phone he [the victim's friend] could hear the gang's use of torture."

The victim suffered a fractured jaw and cigarette burns. In his evidence he "specifically described him [Berhane] as participating" and the 18-year-old's fingerprints were found on the boot of the car.

He held a machete to the victim and "boasted he had kidnapped other people and had removed their fingers", said Mr Davies.

It was also revealed that Berhane was involved in a crash which saw three people injured outside the Old Queen's Head pub, in Essex Road, in March last year. He was convicted of aggravated vehicle taking at Blackfriars Crown Court in October 2017.

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