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Father Involved in Hanley Riot Avoids Jail in What Judge Calls 'Extremely Unusual' Case

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A father who threw bricks during the Hanley riots has avoided immediate imprisonment after a Crown Court judge ruled his case was 'extremely unusual'. Hasnen Iqbal, aged 28, of Havelock Place in Shelton, was sentenced to 16 months in custody, suspended for two years, at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court after pleading guilty to violent disorder.

Iqbal had attended the unrest in Hanley on 3 August 2023 and, for most of the day, attempted to prevent further violence by encouraging others, particularly fellow Muslim,s not to take part in the disorder. However, in the middle of the incident, he was seen throwing

bricks in the direction of both police and protesters. Despite this, the court heard his actions, on the whole, demonstrated efforts to reduce tensions rather than escalate them.

Prosecutor Tomas Quinn outlined the timeline of events, stating that Iqbal arrived in Hanley around midday as police sought to keep rival groups apart. CCTV showed him initially urging calm and acknowledging that officers were “doing their job.” Nevertheless, at approximately 1:50 pm, he joined a group that began throwing bricks. Iqbal himself threw two missiles that landed short and later discarded a large brick into a hedge.

It was also noted that he helped an injured man during the afternoon and later returned to ensure the man’s wellbeing. Iqbal did not participate in more aggressive actions taken by others in the area, such as assaults recorded outside a local Greggs bakery.

In a prepared statement read in court, Iqbal explained that he had come to the mosque after hearing that the **English Defence League (EDL)**, a far-right protest group, was targeting businesses. He claimed he had intended to protect his community and de-escalate the situation. “I accept that in the heat of the moment, I threw items. I immediately regretted my actions,” he said. “I accompanied the group to ensure no more violence would take place.”

His defence barrister, Hayley Parkes, acknowledged that the offence crossed the custodial threshold but argued for leniency, highlighting Iqbal’s remorse, lack of recent criminal history, and his efforts to prevent further escalation. “He was gesturing for people to come back from Greggs. He helped a protester. He is ashamed of what he did,” Parkes said.

Sentencing, Judge Graeme Smith remarked that Iqbal’s conduct was “difficult to understand” in light of his generally peaceful approach that day. “Apart from one isolated incident, your attendance appeared to be to prevent disorder and encourage others not to take part,” the judge stated. “You showed clear and genuine remorse... This incident was completely out of character in the last nine years of your life.”

The suspended sentence includes a **Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (RAR)** of 10 days and 160 hours of unpaid work. Iqbal was also assessed as posing a low risk of reoffending and as a viable candidate for rehabilitation within the community.

This case remains one of the more complex outcomes from the Hanley disorder, with legal observers noting that sentencing decisions must weigh not only the severity of isolated actions but also the broader context in which they occurred.