

Hull Rioter and Beauty Therapist Jailed for Looting O2 Store

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In a shocking display of lawlessness, Kirsty Bennett, a 29-year-old mother and qualified beauty therapist, was sentenced to 16 months in prison for her role in the violent riots that scarred Hull city centre on August 3 last year. The chaos, which erupted outside the Royal Hotel in Ferensway where asylum seekers were housed, saw Bennett hurling missiles at police officers before looting a nearby O2 phone shop, driven by her addiction to crack cocaine.

Prosecutor Stephen Welch told Hull Crown Court that Bennett was part of a mob that gathered after 2.30 pm, targeting the hotel. CCTV footage captured her throwing two objects, including what appeared to be a toilet roll, and passing a drink bottle to a man, likely for use as a projectile against police. By 6.30 pm, she was among the first to storm the O2 store on Jameson Street, snatching mobile phone cases to sell for drug money.

Bennett, of Marfleet Lane, East Hull, was admitted to charges of violent disorder and burglary. Her barrister, Billy Torbett, argued she showed “genuine remorse” for her actions. In a recent interview with the court, Mr Torbett said, “She is shocked at how she behaved and rightly so. She describes having massive regrets for her behaviour. She is a polite woman with, surprisingly, quite a lot going for her.” Despite her troubled past, Bennett had built a career in hospitality and beauty therapy, holding qualifications in hairdressing, nails, ear piercing, and makeup. She has a young daughter and, until recently, battled a crippling addiction to crack cocaine.

Mr Torbett highlighted Bennett’s lack of prior convictions and her early guilty plea, noting she had been clean from drugs for two months and was assessed as a low risk of reoffending. He described her as a “grafter” who had fallen victim to poor relationship choices and addiction, exacerbated by attending the protest with her then-boyfriend.

However, Judge Mark Bury condemned the riot as a “stain on this city,” stressing that Bennett’s actions, throwing objects at police and looting, encouraged further disorder. “You went into Hull to attend what was anticipated to be a peaceful demonstration. That demonstration got out of hand,” he told her. “Attacking police who are simply there to maintain order is unacceptable. I can’t overlook this offence.”

The court heard how the riots overwhelmed police efforts to maintain order, with officers facing a barrage of violence. Bennett’s descent into looting was driven by her addiction, with the stolen phone cases intended to fund her habit. Judge Bury made it clear that such behaviour warranted immediate custody, stating, “No justification can there be for behaviour like this.”

Bennett’s case serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of mob mentality. Once a promising professional, her actions have now cost her freedom and tarnished her future. The people of Hull deserve better than the chaos that unfolded, and the courts have sent a clear message: lawlessness will not be tolerated.