

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*



PAROLE BOARD

*12 Mercer Road
Natick, Massachusetts 01760*

*Telephone # (508) 650-4500
Facsimile # (508) 650-4599*

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Terrence Reidy
Secretary

Gloriann Moroney
Chair

Kevin Keefe
Executive Director

RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

**MUHAMMAD SAHIN
W68017**

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: January 28, 2021

DATE OF DECISION: November 1, 2021

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Gloriann Moroney, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Karen McCarthy, Colette Santa

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review in five years from the date of the hearing.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On April 24, 2000, in Worcester Superior Court, Muhammad Sahin pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the death of 20-year-old Luz Maria Martinez Rondeau and was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. On that same date, he also pleaded guilty to burglary and conspiracy to commit murder and received two concurrent terms of 10 to 15 years in state prison.

Muhammad Sahin was a member of a security threat group (STG) and acted in his capacity as a "soldier" on the night of the murder. Luz Maria Martinez Rondeau was the ex-girlfriend of the designated leader of the security threat group. Ms. Rondeau was scheduled to testify against her ex-boyfriend at a trial for a prior home invasion in which two occupants were shot and one was killed.

¹ Three Board Members voted to deny parole with a review in four years from the date of the hearing.

On February 23, 1999, 22-year-old Muhammad Sahin was at a Worcester bar when another member of the security threat group arrived. The other STG member informed Mr. Sahin that he was there to deliver a message from the group's leader to murder Ms. Rondeau. Mr. Sahin then left the bar and went to a late-night house party before joining co-defendant Jesus Mercedes. The two men drove to Ms. Rondeau's apartment and parked up the street. Mr. Sahin exited the car, walked to the apartment building, and went up the stairs to the third floor. He then kicked in the door, entered the apartment, and immediately went to Ms. Rondeau's bedroom, where she was sleeping with her 3-year-old daughter. Mr. Sahin shot Ms. Rondeau in the head and then fled the scene. Ms. Rondeau died shortly thereafter.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON JANUARY 28, 2021

Muhammad Sahin, now 44-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on January 28, 2021, for a review hearing. He was represented by Attorney John Rull. Mr. Sahin was denied parole after his initial hearing in 2014 and postponed his review hearing in 2019. Mr. Sahin told the Board that he was not seeking a parole release at this time, but rather, he sought a denial with a three-year setback. Mr. Sahin explained that he grew up in an environment wherein he was regularly exposed to criminal activity. As a result, he became a member of a violent security threat group to which he was "blindly loyal." Mr. Sahin said that he was given the responsibility of murdering Ms. Rondeau as punishment for not following previous orders to commit an assault on a different individual. Board Members noted that Mr. Sahin and Ms. Rondeau had a friendly relationship and struggled to understand how Mr. Sahin could murder her in such a brutal fashion. Mr. Sahin acknowledged that Ms. Rondeau was a "kind-hearted, good human being and mother" but, despite his fondness, he murdered her because he was a "follower." He wanted to elevate his status in the security threat group and, at the same time, he was fearful of what would happen to him if he refused another order from group leaders.

The Board discussed its continuing concerns (that were raised in prior hearings) as to Mr. Sahin's pattern of manipulative and controlling behavior. One such incident involved Mr. Sahin faking a suicide attempt, so he could be relocated to a facility that held an inmate he wanted to confront over "setting [him] up" for weapon possession. Mr. Sahin agreed that he was not ready for parole at his prior hearing as he was still in the process of rehabilitation. The Board noted that he has incurred approximately 42 disciplinary reports throughout his incarceration, 18 of which were incurred since his prior hearing. Board Members indicated that they were especially troubled by his accrual of eight disciplinary reports, and two pending disciplinary reports, in the five months leading up to this hearing. Mr. Sahin agreed with the Board that he had to stop accruing disciplinary infractions for his rehabilitation to be successful.

Nonetheless, Board Members noted that Mr. Sahin has engaged in significant programming efforts since his last hearing, including the Restorative Justice Retreat, where he publicly discussed his crime for the first time. He had renounced his affiliation with a security threat group much earlier in his incarceration. Mr. Sahin stated that he has gained insight into his patterns of domestic violence and abuse through a course outside the institution. He indicated he stopped engaging in programs in 2017 because he did not want to move institutions and disrupt a relationship with another inmate, something he acknowledged was a "bad decision." Around this time, Mr. Sahin stopped working and was not employed at the time of this hearing. He told the Board that, in addition to obtaining a job, he plans to seek mental health counseling to "gain insight into his character flaws."

The Board considered testimony in support of parole from Mr. Sahin's family members. The Board considered testimony and a letter in opposition to parole from Ms. Rondeau's sister. The Board considered testimony and a letter in opposition to parole from Worcester County Assistant District Attorney Michelle King.

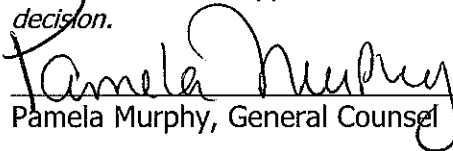
III. DECISION

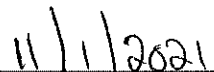
The Board is of the opinion that Muhammad Sahin has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Sahin has served approximately 21 years for the murder of Luz Maria Martinez Rondeau as she lay sleeping next to her young daughter. Despite his involvement in numerous programs, his adjustment remains problematic. He has incurred 44 disciplinary infractions during this incarceration, two of which were pending at the time of his hearing. It should be noted that the disassociation from the [named Security Threat Group] was accepted by the DOC (Department of Correction).

The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." 120 C.M.R. 300.04. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Sahin's institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Sahin's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Sahin's case, the Board is of the opinion that Muhammad Sahin is not rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Sahin's next appearance before the Board will take place in five years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Sahin to continue working toward his full rehabilitation.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing. Pursuant to G.L. c. 127, § 130, I further certify that all voting Board Members have reviewed the applicant's entire criminal record. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.


Pamela Murphy, General Counsel


Date