



Honorable Ben H Brooks III
 Court room 8600
 Mobile Government Plaza
 205 Government Street
 Mobile, AL 36644

RE: Jonathan Nakhla

2023 APR 17 PM 3:19
 CLERK COURT

April 17th, 2023

Dear Judge Brooks,

My name is Reza Yassari and I am currently a Professor of Neurosurgery and Orthopedics Surgery, Vice-Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery, the Director of the Montefiore Spine Center and the Residency Program Director at Montefiore/Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, NY.

It was not always so. I became a refugee at the age of 6 and I grew up in Austria away from family and loved ones. Through adversity and hardship, I finished school, went to medical school and worked as a young physician in England and Austria before relocating to the US with nothing but \$117, a wife with a newborn daughter and an almost delusional belief in the idea of hard work and perseverance. Over the next 10 years, I received a Master's degree from the University of Chicago, was trained as a Neurosurgeon with a Fellowship in Medical Ethics before receiving Fellowship training in Complex Spine at Johns Hopkins Hospital. For the last 13 years, I have been a doctor in the Bronx, living in the community that I serve.

During my life, I have witnessed defeats and successes, all too brief moments of joy and everlasting deep sadness, the loss of parents, friends, family and patients to the irreversible course of life, the price of revolution and war, the senselessness of bad decisions, sometimes my own, sometimes those of others. My work has shown me the exhilarating sense of accomplishment when I was able to help people and the depth of despair when I wasn't, with all the tragic consequences that accompany those instances. During these experiences, I have tried to live a righteous life, finding solace in the thought that my contributions to society would help to make it better.

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THE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL



Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Throughout this, one of my greatest professional accomplishments has been the training of young men and women: I have trained over 100 undergraduates, graduate, medical students, and residents. Jonathan Nakhla was the best resident I have ever trained. From the beginning he stood out in his ability in the operating room, his impeccable clinical judgment and unimpeachable work ethics. More than his keen intellect and competence, he embodied, above all others that I trained, the personal strengths that I would like to see in my own physician: empathy, compassion, kindheartedness, thoughtfulness, reliability and an immense, genuine desire to help his fellow human beings. He stands head and shoulder above anyone I have ever trained in that regard.

All this makes the events from August 2020 and the unimaginable pain that it has caused inconceivable to me. Samantha Thomas lost her life, her parents lost a beloved daughter, the community lost a future brilliant physician. That can never be replaced, neither will the pain ever subside for the Thomas family. The event of that night also affected the Nakhla family: parents lost the pride of their life and the purpose of all the sacrifices they had made for a better life in America, Noah and Ethan lost a father, Sally her husband, and sadly, Johnny lost himself.

I am not going to pretend that I understand your responsibility to balance the scale between justice and mercy. But I would be negligent in my duties as a mentor who has seen Johnny's kindness, humanity and potential; as a father who laments the suffering of Samantha's parents who will grow old without their daughter and the unimaginable emotional impact on Ethan and Noah who will be grow up without a father; as a son who understands the sacrifices of his parents for him to have a better life, now forever lost; as a friend who grieves the loss of his friend to the horrible consequences of the latter's misjudgments, if I did not ask you to consider my appeal for leniency in your sentencing of Jonathan Nakhla.

I always thought that the next letter that I will write for Johnny would be for a promotion to an important position in the community he serves. Thank you for reading the one I wrote today.

Sincerely,

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