Judgment rendered November 18, 2026.
Application for rehearing may be filed
within the delay allowed by Art. 922,
La. C. Cr. P.

No. 57,194-KA

COURT OF APPEAL
SECOND CIRCUIT
STATE OF LOUISIANA

* * * * *

STATE OF LOUISIANA Appellee

versus

AMIN BARKATALI VIRANI Appellant

* * * * *

Appealed from the
Sixth Judicial District Court for the
Parish of East Carroll, Louisiana
Trial Court No. 108,183

Honorable Glen Wade Strong, Judge

* * * * *

LOUISIANA APPEALS
AND WRIT SERVICE
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* * * * *

Before THOMPSON, ROBINSON, and HUNTER, JJ.

HUNTER, J.

Defendant, Amin Barkatali Virani, was charged by bill of information with attempted second degree murder, in violation of La. R.S. 14: 27 and 14:30.1. Following a jury trial, he was found guilty as charged and was sentenced to serve 25 years at hard labor without the benefit of probation, parole, or suspension of sentence. This Court affirmed defendant's conviction, vacated his sentence, and remanded for resentencing. On remand, the trial court resentenced defendant to serve 25 years at hard labor without the benefit of probation, parole, or suspension of sentence. For the following reasons, we affirm.

FACTS

The following facts are taken verbatim from defendant's prior appeal, *State v. Virani*, 56,781 (La. App. 2 Cir. 4/8/25), 432 So. 3d 812:

> Virani was accused of shooting at and attempting to kill Matthew Meadows. He was charged by bill of information on August 4, 2016, with one count of attempted second degree murder in violation of La. R.S. 14:27 and 14:30.1. The trial began on September 13, 2024, where the following testimonies and evidence were presented:
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> Deborah Hopkins testified that she is the 9-1-1 director for East Carroll Parish. She stated that she pulled the requested 9-1-1 phone calls from November 12, 2015, and downloaded them to a USB drive. Ms. Hopkins identified the USB drive and two calls were played for the jury from Meadows and his ex-wife, Rachel Meadows ("Rachel").
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> Dr. Bart Liles testified that he is a general surgeon in Monroe, Louisiana, and was accepted as an expert in general and trauma surgery. He stated that after Meadows became a patient of his, he learned that his wife and Meadows' wife are first cousins. Dr. Liles testified that the first time he met Meadows was when he was contacted to remove a bullet from Meadows' arm. He stated that he removed the bullet and gave it to Trooper Sannika Williams. Dr. Liles stated that the bullet was just beneath the skin near Meadows' elbow.

East Carroll Parish Chief Deputy Bill Hopkins testified that he was the chief investigator at the time of the incident. He stated that he responded to Rachel's house after the 9-1-1 call. He testified that when he arrived at the house, Rachel's daughter ran to him, bear-hugged him, and said, "Daddy's trying to kill mama[.]" Dep. Hopkins stated that when he asked Rachel what happened, she told him that Meadows raised his gun so she raised her gun and shot at him, which is what she said on the 9-1-1 call. Rachel then told Dep. Hopkins that Meadows threw his gun out of his truck window. When Dep. Hopkins asked her where Meadows' gun was located, she showed him a .38 revolver wrapped in a black cloth on the kitchen counter. He testified that when he cleared the weapon, there were four live rounds and one spent round in the cylinder. Dep. Hopkins asked Rachel where her gun was located, and she retrieved a .380 automatic pistol from a back bedroom. He stated that when he cleared the .380, it was not loaded.

Dep. Hopkins testified that he bagged the weapons and the rounds found in the .38 and asked Rachel to show him where the shooting took place. He stated that from what he observed, "it looked like it was a one-sided deal." He testified that he saw four or five .380 casings in the driveway, and the gravel looked as though someone drove away quickly. Dep. Hopkins stated that because the scene did not seem to match Rachel's account of what happened, he called the State Police. He testified that Rachel told another deputy a different version of events, but he could not recall that version. The State replayed Meadows' 9-1-1 call and Dep. Hopkins testified that Meadows said, "I don't know what he shot me with"; "Some guy I don't know"; "he's coming out"; "the guy is coming up behind me again"; and "the guy is in a Hyundai, I'm following him."

Delhi Police Officer Craig Frasier testified that he was working for the East Carroll Sheriff's Department at the time of the shooting. He stated that on the day of the shooting, he was dispatched to the intersection of Hwy 2 and Hwy 65. He testified that when he arrived, he met with Meadows, who was parked in his truck, and asked him what happened. Based on his memory and report, Officer Frasier stated that Meadows told him that as he was speaking with Rachel about custody of the children, he could see someone standing in the dark, the man called Rachel to him to talk, the man started shooting at him, and he retreated to his vehicle. Officer Frasier testified that when he questioned Meadows, Meadows described the shooter as either "Indian" or "Mexican." He stated that he saw blood on Meadows' arm and what appeared to be bullet holes in the

truck. Officer Frasier stated that he called an ambulance for Meadows and secured the truck until investigators arrived.

On cross-examination, Officer Frasier admitted that he stated in his report that Meadows said he was shot by his ex-wife. On redirect, Officer Frasier read his report for the jury, where he relayed the same information that he testified to in his earlier testimony. He clarified that the line stating that Meadows was shot by his ex-wife was a summary of what he was told from dispatch.

Louisiana State Trooper Sanikka Williams testified that she is currently a Lieutenant over criminal investigations and led the investigation into Meadows' being shot. She stated that when she arrived at Rachel's residence, she was briefed by the Sheriff's deputies and other State Police detectives. She testified that Rachel gave three different accounts of the shooting. Crime scene photos were introduced during Lt. Williams' testimony. Lt. Williams identified tire marks leaving the driveway and four shell casings found in the driveway, all of which correlated with where Meadows' truck was parked.

Lt. Williams also identified photos of Meadows' truck, which depicted bullet holes in both the driver's and passenger's windows. She testified that glass was found inside the vehicle, which indicated that the bullet was shot from the outside. She stated that they found Meadows' 9 mm Smith & Wesson inside his vehicle. Lt. Williams stated that the gun inside Meadows' vehicle showed inconsistency in one of Rachel's versions of events that Meadows threw his gun out of the window. She testified that Meadows' 9 mm could hold eight bullets, and eight unfired bullets were found in the weapon. Lt. Williams stated two bullet fragments were also found inside Meadows' truck.

Lt. Williams identified the revolver that was wrapped in cloth and recovered from Rachel. She stated that it contained four live rounds and one fired round. Lt. Williams also identified the Ruger .380 that Rachel retrieved from her bedroom, which could hold six bullets but was empty. Lt. Williams stated that the fact that the .380 was empty indicated it was fired. She testified that the four casings found at the scene were determined to have been shot from the .380.

Lt. Williams testified that she ran the license plate number of the car that chased Meadows, and the vehicle was rented to Zaheer Virani. She stated that once they were able to get

Zaheer's driver's license photo, they compiled a six-photo lineup for Meadows to identify the shooter, and Meadows identified Zaheer as the shooter but noted his hair was shorter in the picture. She stated that she obtained an arrest warrant for Zaheer, executed the warrant, and two days later, asked that the warrant be recalled because Zaheer was not the shooter. She stated that Zaheer was located at The Smoker's Oasis in Monroe; and, based on the information they obtained from Zaheer's interview, they arrested Virani. Lt. Williams testified that Zaheer was able to provide an alibi for the time of the shooting by showing them the inside surveillance video from his store in Monroe. She stated that Zaheer was inside the store in Monroe at the time and not in Lake Providence.

Lt. Williams testified that she obtained cell phone records and location information for Virani's cell phone. She stated that cell site coordinates placed Virani in Lake Providence. She stated that they then obtained a search warrant to ping Virani's phone, which placed him in Irving, Texas. Lt. Williams stated that they later learned Virani had already flown out of the Dallas airport to India. Lt. Williams testified that through her investigation, she learned that the motive for the shooting was to kill Meadows and provide Virani with a portion of Meadows' life insurance; Meadows had a $75,000 life insurance policy, and Rachel was the beneficiary.

Lt. Williams testified that Virani was arrested eight or nine months later at Dulles International Airport in Virginia and transported back to Lake Providence. She identified Virani's Statement of Rights form, where he indicated he was not willing to answer questions. Virani's interview was played for the jury. Virani's counsel objected multiple times during the playing of the interview because Virani asserted his right to counsel in the interview, and the prosecutor asked Lt. Williams why she believed certain statements were relevant to her investigation; all of these objections were overruled.

On cross-examination, Lt. Williams admitted that she made a "mistake" during Virani's interview when she told him that Meadows identified him. When asked why she continued to question Virani after he made multiple statements that he wanted a lawyer, she stated, "There's nothing wrong with me talking, and I wanted him to know what I knew." She also stated that Virani did not admit to committing the crime or planning anything with Rachel.

David Howard testified that he was a transportation officer and assisted in bringing Virani back to Louisiana. He stated that Virani talked constantly in the nine hours they were in the vehicle together. Mr. Howard testified that while he was transporting Virani, Virani stated, "I know what I did was stupid, and I have to live with it," or "What I did was stupid and I have to live with it."

Rachel testified that she pled guilty in 2021 to principal to attempted second degree murder and received a 15-year sentence. She stated that on the day of the shooting, Meadows brought their two daughters to her house about seven o'clock in the evening. She testified that she was with Toby, whom she identified as Virani, when Meadows brought the girls back. Rachel stated that she had known Virani for about a year, and it was her idea for him to shoot Meadows in exchange for life insurance proceeds. She testified that when Meadows dropped off the girls, Virani was on the back porch, and she walked into the carport to talk to Meadows. She stated that Meadows was "hollering and fussing," Virani came around from the back porch, and Virani started shooting. Rachel testified that she did not know what kind of guns were used, but she took the guns from her parents and gave them to Virani.

Rachel testified that after Meadows got in his truck and drove away, she went inside to check on the girls, and Virani left. She was unaware of where Virani went. Rachel did not recall what she said to the 9-1-1 operator and did not want to listen to the 9-1-1 call but agreed that she did not tell the truth if she stated that Meadows shot at her. She testified that Meadows did not shoot at her. Rachel did not recall giving statements to the police that night, but she stated that she was truthful when she pled guilty in 2021. She stated that she told Virani to park behind a shed located behind the house so that Meadows would not see his vehicle. Rachel identified a text message that she sent Virani at 8:34 p.m. after the shooting, where she stated, "Don't answer me, but they have your tags and they're looking for you. I'm still taking the blame, don't answer back." Rachel admitted to lying during the initial investigation but stated that she was telling the truth on the stand. Rachel testified that after consoling the girls, she looked outside and saw both handguns in the driveway; she retrieved the guns and put them on her counter.

Zaheer testified that he, Virani, Virani's wife and kids, and their parents lived in an apartment together in Monroe. He stated that they owned a liquor store, Virani would open the store, and he

would work the evening shift. Zaheer stated that he and Virani did not have the same circle of friends, and he did not know Rachel or Meadows. Zaheer denied shooting at Meadows or visiting Lake Providence.

Dr. Jessica Esparza testified that she is the DNA technical leader at the North Louisiana Crime Lab and was qualified as an expert in forensic DNA analysis. She stated that she created a preliminary report and supplemental report while working on evidence in this case. She testified that she was able to get partial results from the samples of the guns and could not exclude Virani as a contributor.

Troy Stracener testified that he was the director and firearms examiner at the North Louisiana Crime Lab before retiring and was accepted as an expert in firearms examination. He stated that he identified shell casings and bullets from the scene and Meadows' arm that came from the .380. He testified that none of the fired projectiles or casings came from Meadows' gun.

Timothy Piper testified that he owns a company that assists investigators and attorneys with breaking down cell phone records and coordinates. He was accepted as an expert in "call detail records historical analysis." Mr. Piper prepared a report and map using Virani's cell phone records. He testified that on the evening of the shooting, Virani's cell phone originated on I-20, made its way up to Lake Providence, stayed in Lake Providence for a couple of hours until it moved again around 8:00 p.m., traveled down the highway and on I-20, and then returned to Monroe.

Meadows testified that Rachel did not shoot at him, and at the time of the shooting, he did not know who shot at him. He stated that on the evening of the shooting, he took his daughters to Johnny's Pizza to eat and then took them to Rachel's house. He testified that he helped get the younger girl out of her car seat and was standing on the truck's running board preparing to get back in when Rachel asked if they could talk. He stated that he got out of his truck, shut the door, and walked toward the front of the truck; then, he heard a voice that he did not recognize and a man emerged from the rear of the house. He stated that when he saw the man raise the gun, he shouted "no," the man started walking toward him shooting, he fell to the ground, he got in his truck, the man approached his driver side window and fired, and he backed out of the driveway and drove away. Meadows testified that he called 9-1-1 when he got to the end of the street, but he noticed a car following him. He stated

> that when the car passed him, he got behind it and gave the 9-1-1 operator the license plate number and then parked on the shoulder and waited for the sheriff deputy to arrive.
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> Meadows stated that after he was treated at the hospital and gave a statement to the police, his girlfriend took him to get some beer, and he went home. He testified that during the night, the police called him to come back to the station, so his girlfriend drove him back. Officers asked him to identify the shooter in a photo lineup. Meadows admitted that he was not one hundred percent certain that he identified the correct individual that night; it was four o'clock in the morning, he had not slept, and he had a few beers after being shot.
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> The jury found Virani guilty as charged of attempted second degree murder. Virani filed a pro se "Motion for Judgment Notwithstanding the Verdict (JNOV) Based on Insufficiency of Evidence Judgment of Dismissal/Acquittal", which was denied in court prior to sentencing. Virani was sentenced to 25 years at hard labor without the benefit of parole, probation, or suspension of sentence. Virani's counsel argued a motion to reconsider sentence immediately following sentencing, which was denied[.]
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> ***

Id. at 815-19. On appeal, this Court affirmed defendant's conviction. After reviewing the record for errors patent, this Court noted the trial court failed to comply with the provisions set forth in La. C. Cr. P. art. 873, which requires a 24-hour delay between the denial of defendant's *pro se* "Motion for Judgment Notwithstanding the Verdict" and sentencing. Therefore, defendant's sentence was vacated, and this matter was remanded for resentencing.

On remand, the trial court resentenced defendant to serve 25 years in prison, without the benefit of probation, parole, or suspension of sentence, with credit for time served. Thereafter, the court denied defendant's motion to reconsider sentence.

Defendant appeals.

DISCUSSION

Defendant contends the 25-year sentence imposed violates the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution and Art. I, Section 20 of the Louisiana Constitution. Defendant asserts the sentence is excessive in light of the victim's "relatively minor" injuries. More specifically defendant argues the trial court should have given greater consideration to the following factors: (1) Rachel Meadows, who planned the shooting and lured the victim to the area, received a 15-year sentence; (2) defendant's educational, family, and social history (college graduate and former business owner with a family to support); (3) defendant's criminal history (first-felony offender); and (4) defendant's behavior and assistance to others since he has been incarcerated. Additionally, defendant argues the trial court placed great emphasis on his lack of remorse and refusal to take accountability for his actions and incorrectly stated that the victim was shot "in front of his young children."

An appellate court utilizes a two-pronged test in reviewing a sentence for excessiveness. First, the record must show that the trial court complied with La. C. Cr. P. art. 894.1. *State v. Smith*, 433 So. 2d 688 (La. 1983). The trial judge need not articulate every aggravating and mitigating circumstance outlined in La. C. Cr. P. art. 894.1, but the record must reflect that he adequately considered these guidelines in particularizing the sentence to the defendant. *Id*. The important elements the trial court should consider are the defendant's personal history, prior criminal record, the seriousness of the offense, and the likelihood of rehabilitation. *State v. Jones*, 398 So. 2d 1049 (La. 1981). There is no requirement that specific matters be given any

particular weight at sentencing. *State v. DeBerry*, 50,501 (La. App. 2 Cir. 4/13/16), 194 So. 3d 657, *writ denied*, 16-0959 (La. 5/1/17), 219 So. 3d 332.

Second, the court must determine whether the sentence is constitutionally excessive. A sentence violates La. Const. art. I, § 20, if it is grossly out of proportion to the seriousness of the offense or nothing more than a purposeless and needless infliction of pain and suffering. *State v. Smith*, 01-2574 (La. 1/14/03), 839 So. 2d 1, *citing State v. Bonanno*, 384 So. 2d 355 (La. 1980).

The trial court has wide discretion in the imposition of sentences within statutory limits, and the sentence imposed should not be set aside as excessive in the absence of a manifest abuse of discretion. *State v. Abercrumbia*, 412 So. 2d 1027 (La. 1982). On review, an appellate court does not determine whether another sentence may have been more appropriate, but whether the trial court abused its discretion. *State v. Williams*, 03-3514 (La. 12/13/04), 893 So. 2d 7.

The sentencing range for a conviction of attempted second degree murder is not less than 10 nor more than 50 years without benefit of parole, probation, or suspension of sentence. La. R.S. 14:30.1(B); La. R.S. 14:27(D)(1)(a).

The record shows that the trial court adequately considered the factors set forth in La. C. Cr. P. art. 894.1. The court specifically considered defendant's age, family and social history, educational background, and employment history. The court noted (1) defendant was 50 years old at the time of sentencing; (2) defendant was born in Mumbai, India and had one sibling; (3) defendant graduated from high school with "very good grades and received no expulsions or suspensions while enrolled in school"; (4)

defendant graduated from college in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in commerce; (5) defendant maintained employment with several large corporations before moving to Monroe, Louisiana; (6) defendant was married with one daughter; however, he had no contact with his daughter, and he and his wife were legally separated; and (7) defendant was the owner of a thriving, successful business in Monroe, Louisiana until he was arrested in 2016. Moreover, the trial court noted defendant's exemplary record since his incarceration, pointing out that defendant has never received any disciplinary infractions or write-ups, conducts weekly prayer meetings, serves as inmate counsel, and has worked in the prison's commissary for seven years. The court also mentioned defendant's criminal history, which consisted of a 2010 conviction for simple battery and a 2012 conviction for driving while intoxicated, first offense.

The court stated:

> Mr. Virani attempted to take the life of a man that he didn't know in order to receive money from the victim's ex-wife. This was a hired contract [attempted] killing.
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> ***
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> In his memorandum, Mr. Virani argues that the co-principal in this case received a sentence of only 15 years. That resulted from a plea agreement whereby the co-principal agreed to testify against Mr. Virani. Although she solicited the murder, this offense would have never occurred if Mr. Virani had declined her offer of money. The co-principal to the crime received a more lenient sentence possibly because she admitted to her wrongdoing and acknowledged her crime. On the other hand, Mr. Virani has shown no remorse for his attempt to take another man's life in the presence of his young children. He has used every means available to avoid being held accountable for his crime.
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> Mr. Virani appears to be a very intelligent individual[.] He was approximately 40 years old at the time of this offense. He had a college degree. He had a business that, according to him, was flourishing, that he was doing well. He was a successful businessman. He was not a young impulsive person. Yet, he was willing to take the life of another human being for what is a nominal sum of money.

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The trial court sentenced defendant to 25 years' imprisonment without the benefit of probation, parole, or suspension of sentencing, finding a lesser sentence would deprecate the seriousness of the offense. The court stated, "Mr. Virani's callousness and his willingness to take the life of another human being for such a small sum of money shows that he is easily influenced by money. That concerns me that at some point in the future he may be willing to do something else for a sum of money." The court further noted after defendant shot the victim, he pursued him to "inflict the death shot," and defendant's lack of remorse or empathy demonstrated a "total disregard for human life" and indicated he had not learned from his actions.

After reviewing this record, we find the trial court adequately considered the facts of this case, the information in the presentence investigation report, and the relevant aggravating and mitigating factors in Article 894.1. Based on this record, the sentence imposed by the trial court does not shock the sense of justice, nor is it disproportionate to the severity of the offense committed. The sentence is within the sentencing range for the charge, and the midrange sentence is not constitutionally excessive and is appropriate considering defendant's crime of conviction. Accordingly, the trial court did not abuse its discretion in imposing the 25-year sentence.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, we affirm defendant's sentence.

AFFIRMED.