

**COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
IN THE SUPREME COURT
CRIMINAL LAW DIVISION
2012/CRI/bail/00408**

BETWEEN

RAVANO LIGHTBOURNE

Applicant

AND

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

Respondent

Before: The Hon. Justice Neil Brathwaite

Appearances: Mr. Geoffrey Farquharson for the Applicant
Ms. Vashti Bridgewater for the Respondent

Hearing Date: 27th April A.D. 2026

Ruling Date: 11th May A.D. 2026

RULING ON BAIL

1. The Applicant in this matter is a Bahamian citizen born on 9th June 1989. He claims to be thirty-six, with previous convictions but no other pending matters. The Applicant was arraigned in the Magistrate's Court on 27th October 2025 on a charge of Murder, and now seeks to be released on bail, a previous application having been denied on 21st January 2026. In his affidavit in support, the Applicant denies any knowledge that a co-accused was armed, and proclaims his innocence. He also avers that he suffers from uncontrollable hypertension, for which he has been prescribed medication, but claims that he has been without medication for weeks at the Bahamas Department of Corrections, resulting in severe hypertensive episodes and hemorrhages.

2. An affidavit in response was provided in this matter by Calnan Kelly, Counsel in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The documents exhibited to that affidavit include a Record of Interview conducted with the Applicant by investigators. During that interview, the Applicant admits to being present when a friend was struck by a motorist, and to joining others in throwing stones at that vehicle. The Applicant also admits to being the driver of a vehicle that chased the motorists, and claims that a passenger in his vehicle fired shots at the vehicle being chased, leading to the demise of the driver of that vehicle. The Applicant claims that his sole intent was to prevent the escape of that vehicle, and that he had been unaware that a person in his vehicle was armed, or would fire shots. The affidavit in response also included an antecedent form, which indicates that the Applicant was convicted of Assault in 2017, and twice in 2023, as well as Assault with a Deadly Weapon in 2021. On each occasion the Applicant was placed on probation, with a sentence of imprisonment in default. The antecedent form also shows a pending charge of Armed Robbery from 2011.
3. Counsel on behalf of the Applicant submits that the evidence is not cogent, as the only evidence relied upon by the prosecution raises the issue of justification, as the Applicant was chasing a vehicle that had just caused injury to another. Counsel further submits that there has been no rebuttal of the medical evidence, so that it is not contested that the Applicant is not receiving appropriate medical care at BDOCs. It was finally contended that there is no basis to conclude that the Applicant will interfere with witnesses or fail to attend his trial. The court was therefore urged to release the Applicant on bail pending.
4. In response, the Respondent submits that the evidence is cogent, and establishes a case of joint enterprise, as the Applicant admits being the driver of the vehicle from which the fatal shots were fired. Counsel also notes the previous convictions of the Applicant, and suggests that there is an escalation of violent behavior, and a likelihood of danger to public order. The Respondent therefore submits that the Applicant should remain in custody pending his trial,

LAW AND ANALYSIS

5. The tensions surrounding an application for bail have been considered in many cases. In **Richard Hepburn and The Attorney General SCCr. App. No 276 of 2014**, Justice of Appeal Allen opined that:

“5. Bail is increasingly becoming the most vexing, controversial and complex issue confronting free societies in every part of the world. It highlights the tension between two important but

competing interests: the need of the society to be protected from persons alleged to have committed crime; and the fundamental constitutional canons, which secure freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention and serve as the bulwark against punishment before conviction.”

6. Indeed, the recognition of the tension between these competing interests is reflected in the following passage from the Privy Council’s decision in *Hurnam The State* [2006] LRC 370. At page 374 of the judgment Lord Bingham said *inter alia*:

“...the courts are routinely called upon to consider whether an unconvicted suspect or defendant shall be released on bail, subject to conditions, pending his trial. Such decisions very often raise questions of importance both to the individual suspect or defendant and to the community as whole. The interests of the individual is, of course, to remain at liberty unless or until he is convicted of crime sufficiently serious to deprive him of his liberty”. Any loss of liberty before that time, particularly if he is acquitted or never tried, will prejudice him and, in many cases, his livelihood and his family. But the community has countervailing interests, in seeking to ensure that the course of justice is not thwarted by the flight of the suspect or defendant or perverted by his interference with witnesses or evidence and that he does not take advantage of the inevitable delay before trial to commit further offences...”

6. At paragraph 11 she further noted that

“The general right to bail clearly requires judges on such an application, to conduct realistic assessment of the right of the accused to remain at liberty and the public’s interests as indicated by the grounds prescribed in Part A for denying bail. Ineluctably, in some circumstances, the presumption of innocence and the right of an accused to remain at liberty, must give way to accommodate that interest.”

7. The presumption of innocence is enshrined in Article 20(2)(a) of the Constitution of The Bahamas which states:

“Every person who is charged with a criminal offence – (a) shall be Presumed to be innocent until he is proved or has pleaded guilty”.

8. Furthermore, Article 19(1) provides as follows:

“19. (1) No person shall be deprived of his personal liberty save as may be authorised by law in any of the following cases-

(a) in execution of the sentence or order of a court, whether established for The Bahamas or some other country, in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been convicted or in consequence of his unfitness to plead to a criminal charge or in execution of the order of a court on the grounds

of his contempt of that court or of another court or tribunal;

(b) in execution of the order of a court made in order to secure the fulfilment of any obligation imposed upon him by law;

(c) for the purpose of bringing him before a court in execution of the order of a court;

(d) upon reasonable suspicion of his having committed, or of being about to commit, a criminal offence;

(e) in the case of a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years, for the purpose of his education or welfare;

(f) for the purpose of preventing the spread of an infectious or contagious disease or in the case of a person who is, or is reasonably suspected to be, of unsound mind, addicted to drugs or alcohol, or a vagrant, for the purpose of his care or treatment or the protection of the community;

(g) for the purpose of preventing the unlawful entry of that person into The Bahamas or for the purpose of effecting the expulsion, extradition or other lawful removal from The Bahamas of that person or the taking of proceedings relating thereto; and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, a law may, for the purposes of this subparagraph, provide that a person who is not a citizen of The Bahamas may be deprived of his liberty to such extent as may be necessary in the execution of a lawful order requiring that person to remain within a specified area within The Bahamas or prohibiting him from being within such an area.

(2)...

(3) Any person who is arrested or detained in such a case as is

mentioned in subparagraph (1)(c) or (d) of this Article and who is not released shall be brought without undue delay before a court; and if any person arrested or detained in such a case as is mentioned in the said subparagraph (1)(d) is not tried within a reasonable time he shall (without prejudice to any further proceedings that may be brought against him) be released either unconditionally or upon reasonable conditions, including in particular such conditions as are reasonably necessary to ensure that he appears at a later date for trial or for proceedings preliminary to trial”.

9. The relevant provisions of the Bail Act Chapter 103 read as follows:

“4. (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or any other law, any person charged with an offence mentioned in Part C of the First Schedule, shall not be granted bail unless the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal is satisfied that the person charged

(a) has not been tried within a reasonable time;

(b)...

(c) should be granted bail having regard to all the relevant factors including those specified in Part A of the First Schedule and subsection (2B), and where the court makes an order for the release, on bail, of that person it shall include in the record a written statement giving the reasons for the order of the release on bail.

(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2) (a) ...

(a) without limiting the extent of a reasonable time, a period of three years from the date of the arrest or detention of the person charged shall be deemed to be a reasonable time;

(b) delay which is occasioned by the act or conduct of the accused is to be excluded from any calculation of what is considered to be a reasonable time.

(2B) For the purposes of subsection (2)(c), in deciding whether or not to grant bail to a person charged with an offence mentioned in Part C of the First Schedule, the character and antecedents of the person charged, the need to protect the safety of the public order and where appropriate, the need to protect the safety of the victim or victims of the alleged offence, are to be primary considerations.”

9. The factors referred to in Part A are:

“PART A

In considering whether to grant bail to a defendant, the court shall have regard to the following factors—

(a) whether there are substantial grounds for believing that the defendant, if released on bail, would-

(i) fail to surrender to custody or appear at his trial;

(ii) commit an offence while on bail; or

(iii) interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice, whether in relation to himself or any other person;

(b) whether the defendant should be kept in custody for his own protection or, where he is a child or young person, for his own welfare;

(c) whether he is in custody in pursuance of the sentence of a Court or any authority acting under the Defence Act;

(d) whether there is sufficient information for the purpose of taking the decisions required by this Part or otherwise by this Act;

(e) whether having been released on bail in or in connection with the proceedings for the offence, he is arrested pursuant to section 12;

(f) whether having been released on bail previously, he is charged subsequently either with an offence similar to that in respect of which he was so released or with an offence which is punishable by a term of imprisonment exceeding

one year;

(g) the nature and seriousness of the offence and the nature and strength of the evidence against the defendant.”;

10. In an application for bail pursuant to section 4(2)(c), the court is therefore required to consider the relevant factors set out in Part A of the First Schedule, as well as the provisions of section 2B.

11. In considering those factors, I note that the Applicant is charged with a serious offence, involving the use of a firearm, and resulting in the death of another. With respect to the seriousness of the offence, I am mindful that this is not a free-standing ground for the refusal of a bail application, yet it is an important factor that I must consider in determining whether the accused is likely to appear for trial.

12. In the Court of Appeal decision of *Jonathan Armbrister v The Attorney General SCCrApp. No 45 of 2011*, it was stated that:

“The seriousness of the offence, with which the accused is charged and the penalty which it is likely to entail upon conviction, has always been, and continues to be an important consideration in determining whether bail should be granted or not. Naturally, in cases of murder and other serious offences, the seriousness of the offence should invariably weigh heavily in the scale against the grant of bail”.

13. I note also paragraph 30 of *Jeremiah Andrews vs. The Director of Public Prosecutions SCCrApp No. 163 of 2019* where it states:

“30. These authorities all confirm therefore that the seriousness of the offence, coupled with the strength of the evidence and the likely penalty which is likely to be imposed upon conviction, have always been, and continue to be important considerations in determining whether bail should be granted or not. However, these factors may give rise to an inference that the defendant may abscond. That inference can be weakened by the consideration of other relevant factors disclosed in the evidence. eg the applicant’s resources, family connections..

14. While no direct evidence has been provided that the Applicant will not appear for his trial, the Applicant is charged with Murder, which, in considering the possible penalty which could follow a conviction, raises the issue of the likelihood of not appearing for trial.

15. That likelihood must be contrasted with the nature of the evidence against the Applicant. In *Cordero McDonald v. The Attorney General SCCrApp. No. 195 of 2016*, Allen P., at paragraph 34 stated:

“It is not the duty of a judge considering a bail application to decide disputed facts or law. Indeed, it is not expected that on such an application a judge will conduct a forensic examination of the

evidence. The judge must simply decide whether the evidence raises a reasonable suspicion of the commission of the offences by the appellant, such as to justify the deprivation of his liberty by arrest, charge and detention. Having done that he must then consider the relevant factors and determine whether he ought to grant him bail."

16. In considering the cogency of the evidence, I note the following statement from the Court of Appeal in Stephon Davis v DPP SCCrApp. No. 20 of 2023:

"In our view "strong and cogent evidence" is not the critical factor on a bail application. The judge is only required to evaluate whether the witness statements show a case that is plausible on its face. To put it another way, there must be some evidence before the court capable of establishing the guilt of the appellant. In essence, the test is prima facie evidence, comparable to what is required at the end of the prosecution's case in a criminal trial. We can find a useful summary of the strength of the evidence required at the end of the prosecution's case in the headnote to the Privy Council's decision in Ellis Taibo [1996] 48 WIR 74:

"On a submission of no case to answer, the criterion to be applied by the trial judge is whether there is material on which a jury could, without irrationality, be satisfied of guilt; if there is, the judge is required to allow the trial to proceed."

17. In considering what has been placed before me, I bear in mind that the court is not to embark on a trial of the matter on the papers. While the Applicant suggests that the evidence is not cogent as it reveals a defence of justification, I am of the view that such an issue would be ventilated at trial. I am satisfied that the evidence does rise to the level of a prima facie case. However, the question in this case is whether the medical condition of the Applicant, and the treatment afforded to him, warrant his release on bail due to undue hardship.
18. The affidavit in support of this application was filed on 1st April 2026. The matter initially came up for hearing on 13th April 2026, at which time an adjournment was granted to the Respondent, in order to review the application and respond to the same. Despite the grant of the adjournment, no new affidavit in response was filed, with the Respondent relying instead on an affidavit that had been filed in response to a previous bail application in January 2026. No response was provided to the medical complaints of the Applicant, with counsel indicating that information had been requested from the relevant authorities, but not provided.

19. While the condition of the Applicant is commonplace, it is still an issue that requires medical intervention, as a failure to control hypertension can lead to disastrous results. In the absence of any medical information in response, it can therefore not be denied that the Applicant has a serious condition requiring treatment that is not being appropriately addressed. It must be remembered that persons in the custody of the state are not able to provide for their own medical needs, but must rely on the organs of the state to provide any necessary care. Failing that, it is difficult to justify pretrial detention.

CONCLUSION

20. In considering the question of bail, the court is required to conduct a balancing exercise between the Applicant's right to liberty, and the need to protect the public. In conducting that exercise, I accept that the charge in this case is extremely serious. I do not consider the other pending matter, which of some vintage, as militating against the grant of bail. I also note the previous convictions which, though violent, are relatively minor, resulting as they did in light sentences. While I am satisfied that a prima facie case is made out, and that there is a risk of absconding, I am unable to conclude in the face of the uncontroverted claims of a failure to treat a medical condition, the continued detention of the Applicant is justified. The balance must therefore lie in favor of the Applicant's right to liberty.
21. Bail is therefore granted in the amount of \$20,000.00 with one, two, or three sureties. The Applicant is to be fitted with an Electronic Monitoring Device, and is to report to the East Street South Police Station every Monday, Wednesday and Friday before 6pm. The Applicant is required to observe a curfew at his registered address between the hours of 8pm and 6 am daily. The Applicant is not to interfere with the witnesses either personally or through an agent. Any breach of these conditions will render the Applicant liable to remand.

Dated this 11th day of May A.D., 2026



Neil Brathwaite
Justice