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ASAN Statement on Sentencing in Jude Mirra's Murder

Last week, eight-year-old Jude Mirra's mother, Gigi Jordan, was sentenced to eighteen years in prison for killing her autistic son after a jury found her guilty of manslaughter last fall.

Jude was murdered over five years ago when his mother administered a fatal overdose of sleeping pills and tranquilizers in a hotel room, and attempted to commit suicide. As is often the case when family members kill their disabled relatives, Jude's mother claimed that she acted out of love for her son and that his death was a mercy killing.

We are pleased that the Court chose to sentence Jude's mother in accordance with the serious nature of her crime. Although the jury in this case chose not to find Jude's mother guilty of the more serious charge of murder, the judge's choice to impose an eighteen-year sentence will nevertheless help to send a strong message to the public that disabled victims of murder deserve the same standard of justice as non-disabled murder victims. In many similar cases, the perpetrators receive little to no real punishment for their actions, even when they express no remorse.

Justice Charles H. Solomon of the State Supreme Court noted in his sentencing remarks that Jude's mother has not shown any remorse in the five years since Jude's death. In fact, in the last week of her trial, she appeared on national television to defend her actions stating that her only regret is that she did not try harder to kill herself. Justice Solomon noted that the trial produced no evidence to support her claim that Jude was a survivor of past sexual abuse or a potential victim of future sexual abuse, and that even if he were in danger, his multi-millionaire mother had the ability to access innumerable options short of killing her son.

We are especially disturbed at the particular nature of the claim that she murdered Jude in order to protect him from sexual abuse. Many autistic people are survivors of childhood sexual abuse and are often targeted because of their disability status. This type of violence is particularly reprehensible, but in no way whatsoever justifies murdering a child. Rather than seek justice or meaningful protection for her son, Jude's mother made a deliberate choice to end his life. Her claim that murder is the answer to the possibility of sexual abuse is an appalling insult to the many autistic adults who have survived past sexual violence.

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network is committed to advocating for justice for all people with disabilities in order to advance a more equitable society. We continually urge law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges to treat the lives of autistic people and those with other disabilities as equally valuable and worth living as those of people without disabilities. Whenever the perpetrator in one of these cases receives a sentence comparable to those routinely applied in other murder cases, we count that as a victory for equitable treatment under the law. Yet we remain ever vigilant for a future in which we no longer need to add any names to our list of the dead.