

guardian.co.uk

US TV executive convicted of beheading wife

Jury rejects Muzzammil Hassan's claim that killing his wife was justified because she had abused him and he was afraid of her

Associated Press
guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 8 February 2011 03.01 GMT

A [larger](#) | [smaller](#)



Muzzammil Hassan

and his wife Aasiya. Hassan, founder of a Muslim-oriented New York TV station, has been convicted of beheading his wife in 2009. Photograph: Ho/AP

The founder of a New York television station has been convicted of beheading his wife in 2009 in the studio the couple had opened to counter negative stereotypes of Muslims after the September 11 terror attacks.

Muzzammil "Mo" Hassan never denied that he killed Aasiya Hassan inside the suburban Buffalo station the couple established to promote cultural understanding.

A jury deliberated for one hour before rejecting his claim that the killing was justified because he was long abused by and afraid of his wife.

Pakistan-born Hassan, 46, had been served with divorce papers a week before his wife's body was found at the offices of Bridges TV in Orchard Park, where the couple also lived. Hassan was arrested after walking into a police station on 12 February 2009 and calmly telling officers his wife was dead.

Prosecutor Colleen Curtin Gable said Hassan bought two hunting knives less than an hour before the attack, parked his luxury car out of view at the station and then hid in wait inside. During a 37-second frenzy, he stabbed his wife more than 40 times in the face, back and chest then decapitated her. Surveillance video captured some of the attack inside a darkened hallway.

Curtin Gable said Hassan "went on and on about his hurt and pain".

"Think of Aasiya's hurt and pain in years of marriage and the final 30 or 40 seconds trying desperately to fend off his two knives with her hands and possibly being conscious as he began to behead her," Curtin Gable said during a closing statement that had some jurors in tears.

Hassan spent his two-hour closing remarks describing himself as a slave to his wife's rages. He said he was let down by a domestic violence system that refuses to recognise

men as victims. He said a "religion of patriarchy" had "unleashed a bloodbath on American women because battered men have no legal way out."

"You're the only ones who've ever heard my side of the story after silence for 10 years," Hassan told jurors. He said he didn't blame his wife, but her troubled childhood, for abusive behaviour he called "the evil dragon".

But Hassan failed to produce any witnesses or evidence to corroborate his abuse claims. Prosecutors cited numerous police reports filed by his wife and her medical records to prove she was the battered spouse.

Aasiya Hassan, 37, had sought treatment for ailments including neck and back pain and early onset cataracts, which may have been caused by repeated trauma, Curtin Gable said.

When Mo Hassan killed his wife, their children, then four and six years old, were fastened into car seats outside in a van along with his teenage son from one of his two previous marriages. His wife had been on her way to take them to dinner when she ran into the station to drop off his laundry.

From the start, his lawyers dismissed suggestions that culture played a role in the killing.

Attorney Nadia Shahram, who lectures on the effects of religion and culture on family law at the University at Buffalo, said she believed "this was more than a domestic-violence homicide."

Shahram, who was in the courtroom for closing arguments, said several factors led her to believe the death was "a mix of domestic violence and honour killing," including the separation of the victim's head from her body.

"He separated the mind, which he saw as worthless, and kicked it," she said.

Hassan dismissed three of his lawyers and replaced a fourth with himself. He kept the fourth lawyer as an adviser, as required by law. He faces up to 25 years to life in prison when he is sentenced on 9 March.

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2011