

# Rapist kills his parents then leaps to death

Fiona Hamilton Crime Correspondent

A convicted rapist recently released from jail is believed to have murdered his parents in their flat before committing suicide.

Ashraf Amrani, 30, was found on a first-floor roof in Westbourne Grove, west London, at about 1.20pm on Friday. His death was described as “unexplained” but there was speculation that he had thrown himself from the building. Police went to inform his parents of the death the following day, only to find their bodies in their flat on the same street.

Scotland Yard confirmed that offi-

cers were not seeking anyone else in connection with the deaths of Hassan and Zohra Amrani, a retired couple originally from Morocco.

Amrani was arrested last Tuesday on suspicion of affray and bailed to appear in court later this month.

Neighbours living in Landor House, a 1960s two-storey block of flats, saw police at the flat two days later. They said that Mr and Mrs Amrani, aged 72 and 59, were upset when their son recently turned up out of the blue.

Ashraf Amrani was jailed for seven years in 2010 after filming a vicious sex attack on a young woman and threatening to send the footage to her family.

He lured his victim to his home and subjected her to a carefully planned assault in which he ordered her to carry out a series of “humiliating” domestic tasks before filming himself sexually abusing her.

Southwark crown court heard that after finally releasing his victim, Amrani tried to blackmail her by threatening to send the film clips to her parents if she told anyone what had happened.

It is unclear exactly when he was released.

One neighbour said Mrs Amrani looked “unhappy” when she spoke to her on Thursday and had spoken about returning to Morocco “if she could”.

The woman’s brother later said that police had been seen trying to force their way into the building.

She said that he had got the “impression” that the son, who had not lived there for years, was inside and refusing access to police. “I kind of sensed something was wrong. When I came home last night I just hoped they would be alive. When you are young you do all sorts, but to actually lead to this. I’m shocked,” the neighbour added.

“They were a very sweet couple, they had a lovely house — the woman was very house proud.

“They had a son and daughter, and a grandson who I think was seven or

eight. The grandson used to visit them regularly. I can just picture them. They were a very nice husband and wife.”

Scenes of crime officers were searching the flat last night while a blue forensic science tent was erected outside, where three bouquets of flowers were left in tribute.

Police cordoned off the area with blue and white tape and uniformed officers were standing guard. Residents in the block were required to sign in and out when they left their homes.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said that detectives from the homicide and major crime command had launched an investigation into the three deaths.



Young patriot Harry Westlake, 6, an England rugby mascot, sings his heart out during the national anthem at Twickenham on Saturday. Match report, pages 60-62

## Quarter of psychotic cases linked to skunk cannabis

Nadia Brooks

Smoking extra-strong varieties of cannabis could be the cause of a quarter of all new cases of psychotic mental conditions such as schizophrenia, a six-year study concludes.

Researchers found that about 60,000 people in Britain suffered hallucinations and paranoid episodes brought on by the use of high-potency skunk. Daily users of skunk were five times as likely to suffer psychosis as those who never used it.

The findings prompted claims that smoking cannabis was like playing “Russian roulette with your mental health”. Psychiatrists said that there was now an “urgent need” to educate the public about the risks.

The report comes amid warnings that even newer varieties, some of them more than twice as potent as those available on British streets, have been developed in the Netherlands.

The study, by researchers from the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience at King’s College London, is due to be published in *The Lancet Psychiatry* journal this week.

The research looked at almost 800 working-age adults from one area of south London, half of whom had recently been treated for a psychotic episode for the first time. Incidence of schizophrenia in the area has doubled

since the mid-1960s, a trend thought to be linked to drug use.

Cannabis use in the UK overall has fallen by about 40 per cent in the past decade, but the drug’s potency has increased sharply in that time. Levels of tetrahydrocannabinol, the main psychoactive compound, are about 15 per cent in skunk, compared with about 4 per cent in traditional “hash” cannabis.

The study noted: “Compared with those who never used cannabis, individuals who mostly used skunk-like cannabis were nearly twice as likely to be diagnosed with a psychotic disorder if they used it less than once per week, almost three times as likely if they used it at weekends, and more than five times as likely if they were daily users.”

It found that skunk use was the “strongest predictor” of psychotic illness in those studied and that 24 per cent of new cases in the area could be attributed to it.

The study said: “The worldwide trend of liberalisation of the legal constraints on the use of cannabis further emphasises the urgent need to develop public education to inform young people about the risks of high-potency cannabis.”

Mark Winstanley, chief executive of the charity Rethink Mental Illness, said: “Essentially, smoking cannabis is like playing a very real game of Russian roulette with your mental health.”



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