

Judge enters not guilty pleas to murder charges on Axel Rudakubana's behalf as he remains silent

From the [Liverpool Echo](#) and the [Daily Mail](#)

A judge has entered not guilty pleas to three counts of murder on behalf of Axel Rudakubana in connection with the Southport stabbings. The 18-year-old, of Banks in West Lancashire, appeared before Liverpool Crown Court this afternoon, Wednesday, December 18 accused of murdering six-year-old Bebe King, seven-year-old Elsie Dot Stancombe and nine-year-old Alice Da Silva Aguiar.

Rudakubana is also charged with attempting to murder eight other children, who cannot be named for legal reasons, and two adults, Leanne Lucas and John Hayes, who were stabbed during the incident.

Rudakubana appeared via videolink from HMP Belmarsh wearing a grey sweatshirt and moved his head from side to side at times as the charges were read to him.

The teenager, unlike on previous hearings, did not cover his face with his sweatshirt during the hearing.



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Instead, he sat slightly hunched, looking straight ahead at the camera on the videolink.

Mr Justice Goose twice asked him if he could hear proceedings from Liverpool Crown Court at the start of the hearing but Rudakubana did not respond.

A prison officer with him then confirmed audio could be heard in the room the defendant was seated in.

The judge then asked the clerk of the court to put each of the charges to the defendant, but each time Rudakubana did not respond.

After he refused to reply to the first count and rocked his head from side to side, the judge said: 'He can hear what's being said; accordingly I'm satisfied he's refusing to reply or speak. That is, in legal terms, due to malice.'

Mr Justice Goose then ruled that the remainder of the charges be read and formal not guilty verdicts entered on his behalf.

About 15 family members, including Alice's parents, were in the public gallery for the hearing.

This is a positive result; the reports must confirm that he is fit to plead, but Mute of Malice, as is the legal term for one who refused to speak. The suspicions around the authorities covering up some of the facts and background were raising concerns that he would be declared unfit to plead and a hospital order made thus directing him to the confines of a secure mental hospital without any public examination. His trial is set for 20th January. Two other trials of interest are set for the same day in different courts, as President Trump will be inaugurated in the US and newspaper coverage will be focused on that. Having worked in a court I think that is genuine coincidence but that there is such speculation shows the lack of trust in our institutions.