

# Shopkeeper accused of raping girl in store basement says he never went there 'as it was full of rubbish'

*After a couple of weeks of the prosecution case interspersed with legal arguments the Manchester Evening News has two reports of the current rape gang trial at Crown Court Minshull Street Manchester. [Here](#) and [here](#).*

This afternoon Mushtaq Ahmed was the first defendant to give evidence in the Rochdale abuse trial. Mr Ahmed, who spoke through an interpreter, told the court that he'd been born in Pakistan and moved to the UK in 1988 at the age of 30.

Mushtaq Ahmed told jurors that the basement of the store in Rochdale smelt of damp, and he kept the door closed. He said he was not aware of any sexual activity taking place there.

Prosecutors allege that Girl B was raped by Mr Ahmed and another defendant, Mohammed Zahid, in the basement of the town centre shop. They both deny the allegations.

Mr Ahmed was the first defendant in the trial of seven men, accused of a series of sexual offences allegedly committed against her and another girl in the town between 2001 and 2006, to give evidence in his defence.

Earlier, it was confirmed that Mr Zahid, said to be known as 'Bossman' and the only defendant to be accused of abusing both girls, would not be giving evidence in his defence.



📍 Mohammed Zahid and Mushtaq Ahmed, two of the men on trial (Image: Manchester Evening News)

📍 Mushtaq Ahmed (Image: Getty Images)

No evidence was called on behalf of the absent defendant Kashir Bashir who is being tried in his absence, jurors at Minshull Street Crown Court heard.

*Last month Arfan Khan, who faced two counts of indecency with a child, one count of sexual activity with a child and one count of rape, was officially found not guilty on the four counts. He was dismissed with no further action.*

Mr Ahmed said he didn't use the basement as he 'didn't need to'. He added: "I never seen a mattress down there. I never put any mattress there. If there was a mattress before I moved in, I don't have any knowledge in relation to that."

Mr Ahmed was asked when he first met Girl B. He said: "The first time she came to my shop with Kasir Bashir. She came with him in his car." Mr Ahmed told jurors that he would leave Mr Zahid and Mr Bashir in the shop to mind it while he travelled to Bradford to buy supplies. He said that at one stage he had a 'disagreement' with the two men. . . they used to smoke cannabis . . . I told them to stop but they didn't. And then after that I decided that I had to sell my shop."

Mr Parry-Jones asked him: "What about any sexual activity in that shop?"

"I haven't seen anything," the defendant replied.

Mr Ahmed said that Girl B came into his shop on her own and asked him for money. He said: "She was asking for money, that 'I need £20, I've got problems with my gas and electricity bills'." He said he gave her the money. "After that, she left and she returned again two or three weeks later

"I didn't give her the money. When I refused she swore at me a lot. . . She threatened me as well, if I didn't give her the money she would start a case against me."

*Yesterday (Tuesday 8th) Girl A gave evidence at the trial for a second time, after being recalled to the witness box.*

The judge previously granted Naheem Akram's barrister permission to question Girl A again, after his lawyer in the case was replaced. Under cross-examination from Mr Akram's new barrister, Ahmed Hossain KC, Girl A confirmed that she alleges that Mr Akram, also said to be known by the nickname 'Lala', was present when she was filmed while being sexually abused. She also confirmed that she claims he had sex with her about seven or eight times when she was a underage.

He claimed that Mr Akram was not present when the video clip was filmed, which Girl A disagreed with. Mr Hossain asked Girl A about the incident, in which she was filmed being sexually abused. Prosecutors have claimed that she was told the video would be circulated unless she had sex with Mr Akram and Mr Shahzad, but that the video emerged later anyway.

Girl A told jurors that she had taken an ecstasy pill prior to the incident, allegedly given to her by Mr Shahzad, and that she had also drunk alcohol. Mr Hossain asked her: "Is the reality that because of drugs, because of drink, and because of time and perhaps because of wanting to know about what happened in that car, that you don't actually remember what happened?"

Girl A replied: "I know what happened, I just don't know the whole detail of everything."

After her evidence concluded, prosecutor Rossano Scamardella KC told jurors that the Crown was no longer pursuing charges of conspiracy to commit indecency with a child and conspiracy to cause a child to engage in penetrative sexual activity against Mr Shahzad, Mr Akram and Mr Hussain.

The KC told jurors: "The behaviour that is reflected in these counts is in fact reflected in other counts, so we no longer need to have conspiracy counts on the indictment." He then closed the prosecution case, which first began in late January.

*The trial is expected to continue later this week*