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Jailed transgender woman felt more supported by inmates than the public



Jade Follett was sentenced to 21 months in jail today. Photo / Mark Mitchell

A transgender woman stabbed a man who stalked and threatened her after they met through a dating website.

Jade Follett was sentenced to 21 months in jail today, but the Wellington District Court was told the much older stabbing victim was in many ways to blame for events that triggered the violent incident.

Judge Bruce Davidson said a "sexually degrading and inflammatory" text message preceded the stabbing in May last year.

Follett was 19 when encountering the man, aged in his 40s, whose name is suppressed.

They soon met in person, but a liaison in 2012 took a disturbing turn and Follett fled from a car.

The man kept trying to contact Follett, pestering her with text messages.

Follett's lawyer Elizabeth Hall said this was despite her client's "concerted effort" to stop the man contacting her.

Though Follett spurned contact, the man discovered where she lived - and his texts culminated with the threatening, obscene text on Monday, May 26.

"You were concerned not only about yourself but others at your house," Judge Bruce Davidson said in his sentencing remarks.

"He came onto your property. You met him in the driveway armed with a knife."

The man tried to run away from the Paparangi property but Follett gave chase and stabbed him three times in the back. The man fell down, and Follett stabbed him a fourth time in the chest.

Even "a family dog" got involved in the attack, Judge Davidson said.

The court heard Follett, 21 at the time, quickly admitted to stabbing the man but told police

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she did so to protect herself and family members.

Judge Davidson said the man had largely recovered from the attack but experienced "financial and emotional consequences".

Follett could have opted for home detention but Miss Hall said her client didn't wish to be a burden on her family, who had nonetheless been supportive.

The court also heard that although being in a men's prison was tough for Follett, some inmates were actually more supportive than members of the community.

Miss Hall said her client's case showed how societal attitudes to transgender people varied.

She said some prison officers were compassionate and thoughtful but others refused to recognise her transgender status or call her Jade.

Follett had already spent six months in custody, most of that segregated or in isolation.

The judge said Follett had since accepted the need for anger management and exercising better self-control.

He said Miss Hall had managed to persuade the court to downgrade Follett's charge to one of injuring with intent, instead of the more severe charge of injuring with intent to cause grievous bodily harm.

Follett was sentenced to 21 months' imprisonment. She was granted leave to convert that sentence to one of home detention.

People sentenced to jail for two years or less are released after serving half the court-imposed sentence.

Because of this, and time already spent in custody, Follett is likely to be released in just under five months.

The judge upheld a Crown request for the victim to have name suppression.

- NZME.