

**Fishmonger to hang for murder of British students**  
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**By Desmond Davidson**

The Kuching High Court today sentenced a fishmonger to death over the fatal stabbing of two British medical students on August 6 last year.

Judge Justice Chew Soo Ho found the prosecution had proved beyond reasonable doubt that 23-year-old Zulkipli Abdullah, who boasted to friends of wanting to "test his strength against taller, bigger and stronger foreigners", was guilty of chasing down Aidan Brunger and Neil Gareth Dalton, both 22, as the two Britons walked back to their backpackers' lodge, before attacking them with a knife.

Zulkipli, who was charged under Section 302 of the Penal Code which carries mandatory death, showed no reaction when the sentence was read.

His family members were later seen weeping on a bench outside the court.

The double murder not only shocked Kuching citizens where such a crime is a rarity, but made headline news in the United Kingdom.

Brunger and Dalton, students of Newcastle University who were just three days away from completing their six-week work placement at the Sarawak general hospital, had an altercation with Zulkipli and his three friends at an all-night cafe over claims that the two Britons were too noisy.

When Brunger and Dalton decided to leave the cafe and walk back to their backpackers lodge about 2km away between 4am and 4.15am, Zulkipli, still seething with anger, and his friends decided to give chase.

They eventually caught up with the young Britons about 100m from the cafe.

While his three friends stayed in the car, Zulkipli leapt out and went after Brunger and Dalton.

Brunger, from Gillingham, Kent, collapsed and died from a single stab wound in his chest in front of a car repair shop, while Dalton, from Belper, Derbyshire, died about 50m away from two stab wounds in his chest and another two in the back.

Tipped off by an eye-witness, police traced Zulkipli by the registration number of the car he was in.

Zulkipli was arrested in his home in Kampung Gersik, about 1km from the courthouse. His accomplices were also detained.

Police recovered the knife used to kill the Britons, which had been cleaned, in a cupboard in Zulkipli's bedroom.

Brunger's father, Paul, was present in court to hear the sentencing.

Though he had politely refused to talk to the press, Paul read a statement in court with the permission of Justice Chew.

He said that since his son and Dalton were murdered, their families' lives had been shattered.

"They were two exceptional young men with such promise – kind, funny and full of life.

"Their deaths have left their families and many good friends utterly devastated.

"Neil and Aidan were having a wonderful time in Borneo working in Sarawak (general) hospital and also travelling around, seeing as much of the beautiful country as they could.

"Both boys said how very welcoming and friendly the people were.

"Our sons would soon have qualified as doctors. Their unprovoked and senseless murders as they were walking home after a night out with other medical students mean that Aidan and Neil will never have the chance to spend their lives caring for and helping others.

"They would have given so much to the world. We are so very proud of both of them and in what they achieved in their all too short lives."

The elder Brunger said although the two families are pleased that the man responsible for their sons' murders was held accountable, "the guilty verdict does not bring our sons back". – March 31, 2015.

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