

IN THE STATE COURTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

[2026] SGDC 336

District Arrest Case No 914777 of 2025

Public Prosecutor

Against

Ramachandharan Karthik

JUDGMENT

[Criminal Law – Offences – Voluntarily Causing Hurt by Dangerous Weapon
– Section 324 Penal Code]

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Public Prosecutor
v
Ramachandharan Karthik

[2026] SGDC 336

District Arrest Case No 914777 of 2025
District Judge Justin Yeo
20, 21, 22 May; 15 September 2026

12 October 2026

Judgment reserved.

District Judge Justin Yeo:

Introduction

1 The accused, Mr Ramachandharan Karthik (“the Accused”), intentionally stabbed Mr Usilappan Arivalagan (“the Victim”) multiple times with a screwdriver, intending to thereby cause hurt. He was charged for voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means under s 324 of the Penal Code 1871 (“Penal Code”). The charge reads as follows:

You... are charged that you, on 30 July 2025, at about 12.30am, at the fitness corner in the vicinity Blk 56 Teban Gardens, Singapore 600056, did voluntarily cause hurt to one Usilappan Arivalagan by means of an instrument, which used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, intending thereby to cause hurt to the said Usilappan Arivalagan, to wit, by stabbing the said Usilappan Arivalagan with a screwdriver multiple times on the upper part of his body, and thereby causing him to suffer lacerations and puncture wounds, and you have thereby committed an offence punishable under s 324 of the Penal Code 1871.

2 The Accused claimed trial to the charge, maintaining that he had acted in exercise of his right of private defence.

3 Having considered the evidence adduced at trial and the submissions of both parties, I find the Accused guilty of the charge and convict him accordingly.

Undisputed Facts

4 In this section, I set out the undisputed facts drawn from the evidence at trial, as well as the Statement of Agreed Facts which was admitted pursuant to s 267 of the Criminal Procedure Code 2010 (“CPC”). The disputed facts will be explored in the context of the issues that have arisen for determination.

Events leading to the physical altercation

5 The Accused and the Victim are male Indian nationals working in Singapore.¹ In May 2025, one Ms Brigilda (“Ms Brigilda”), a female Indian national working in Singapore, approached the Victim to enquire whether he knew of any rooms available for rent.² The Victim informed her that he would look around.³

6 In June 2025, one Mr Ram Prabu provided the Victim with the Accused’s contact details, informing him that the Accused had a vacant room available for rent.⁴ The Victim passed the Accused’s contact details to Ms

¹ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraphs 1 and 2.

² Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 2.

³ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 2.

⁴ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 3.

Brigilda, who thereafter stayed at the vacant room in June 2025.⁵ About one month later, Ms Brigilda returned to India without paying the rent owed to the Accused.⁶

7 In late June 2025, the Accused contacted the Victim and sought payment for Ms Brigilda's rental arrears.⁷ At that time, the Victim was in India.⁸ He thus informed the Accused that he would speak further upon his return to Singapore.⁹

8 On 28 July 2025, the Victim attempted to contact the Accused by way of a phone call, but the Accused did not answer the phone.¹⁰

9 The following day, 29 July 2025, the Accused returned the call and demanded that the Victim pay Ms Brigilda's rental arrears.¹¹ The Victim refused.¹² The Accused asked the Victim to meet him at Tuas, where the Accused worked.¹³ The Victim counter-proposed that they meet at Teban Gardens, where both men resided.¹⁴

⁵ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 3.

⁶ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 3.

⁷ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 4.

⁸ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 4.

⁹ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 4.

¹⁰ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 5.

¹¹ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 5.

¹² Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 5.

¹³ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 5.

¹⁴ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 5.

10 That night, at about 11pm, the Accused called the Victim to say that he had returned home.¹⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Accused called the Victim again and told the Victim that he was at the foot of his (*ie*, the Accused's) block.¹⁶

11 On 30 July 2025 at about 12.30am, the Victim went to the Accused's block and met him at the fitness corner next to Block 56 Teban Gardens.¹⁷

The Physical Altercation

12 A physical altercation ensued. The Accused and the Victim had different accounts of the altercation, but it is undisputed that (a) the Accused took a screwdriver ("the Screwdriver") out of his pocket and stabbed the Victim multiple times in the upper body; and (b) the Accused thereafter fled the scene, throwing the Screwdriver into the bushes near a mosque.

The Accused's Arrest and Statements

13 The Accused was arrested on the same day of the altercation (*ie*, 30 July 2025) at about 1.20am.¹⁸

14 Two statements were recorded from the Accused later that day, under CPC s 22 at 2.16pm ("Long Statement"), and CPC s 23 at 4.10pm ("Cautioned Statement").¹⁹ Both statements were recorded with the help of a Tamil interpreter, Mr S Anparasan ("Mr Anparasan"). The Accused made the

¹⁵ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 6.

¹⁶ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 7.

¹⁷ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 8.

¹⁸ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 9.

¹⁹ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 10.

statements voluntarily, with no threats, inducements or promises having been made during the statement recording.²⁰

The Victim's Injuries

15 The Victim was admitted to Ng Teng Fong General Hospital (“NTFGH”), Department of General Surgery on 30 July 2025. He was found to have puncture wounds in the following areas:²¹

- (a) Left temple region 0.5cm laceration
- (b) Left neck puncture wound about 0.5cm
- (c) Left mid-clavicle puncture wound
- (d) Left superior pectoral region puncture wound
- (e) Left inferior pectoral 3 x 0.5cm laceration
- (f) Left biceps region puncture wound

16 In view of his injuries, the Victim underwent a number of imaging investigations, including chest X-rays, computed tomography (“CT”) scans of the brain, and carotid and thoracic angiograms.²² The imaging procedures showed that the injuries had resulted in a segmental pulmonary artery injury (*ie*, injury to artery in the lung) with left haemothorax (*ie*, blood entering the chest cavity) and pneumothorax (*ie*, air entering the chest cavity).²³

²⁰ Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 11.

²¹ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

²² P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

²³ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025; Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 17.

17 Following review by specialist teams from the Cardiothoracic and Interventional Radiology departments, the Victim was placed on conservative management.²⁴ He was given analgesics, antibiotics and anti-emetics, and his wounds were dressed.²⁵ He was discharged on 1 August 2025 in stable condition, with advice to follow up with the General Surgery and Cardiothoracic Surgery outpatient clinics.²⁶ He was placed on hospitalisation leave from 30 July to 17 August 2025 to recover.²⁷ Following review appointments on 15 and 18 August 2025, he was discharged from further review.²⁸

The Trial Process

18 At trial, the Prosecution called seven witnesses to give evidence. In the order that they gave their evidence, they were:

- (a) PW1 – The Victim;
- (b) PW2 – Mr Jerral Cheong Wei Chieh, a police officer (Assistant Superintendent) who was the team leader deployed to attend to the incident on 30 July 2025;
- (c) PW3 – Mr Muhammad Fadly Bin Makrof, a police officer (Station Inspector) who was deployed to attend to the incident on 30 July 2025;
- (d) PW4 – Mr Anparasan, who served as the interpreter for the recording of the Long Statement and Cautioned Statement.

²⁴ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

²⁵ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

²⁶ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

²⁷ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

²⁸ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

- (e) PW5 – Dr Kishore Rajaguru (“Dr Rajaguru”), a surgeon NTFGH, who wrote the medical report on the Victim, dated 11 August 2025. The report was based on the facts provided in the hospital’s medical records.
- (f) PW6 – Dr Oh Han Boon (“Dr Oh”), a surgeon at NTFGH, who was the consultant in charge who attended to the Victim after the Victim had been seen by the emergency physicians.
- (g) PW7 – Mr Mohd Akmal Naqib Bin Razman, a police officer (Inspector 2) who served as the investigation officer for the present case.

19 For completeness, the attendance of Mr Muhammad Khairin bin Muhammad Amran, the report lodger, was dispensed with.

20 After the close of the Prosecution’s case, the Defence did not make a submission that there was no case to answer. I found that there was some evidence which was not inherently incredible that satisfied the elements of the charge, and thus called upon the Accused to give evidence in his own defence. The Accused offered himself as the only defence witness. The Defence’s case was essentially that the Accused had stabbed the Victim while acting in private defence.

Relevant Statutory Provisions

21 The relevant statutory provisions relating to the present offence are set out in Penal Code ss 321 and 324, which provide as follows:

Voluntarily causing hurt

321. Whoever does any act with the intention of thereby causing hurt to any person, or with the knowledge that he is

likely thereby to cause hurt to any person, and does thereby cause hurt to any person, is said “voluntarily to cause hurt”.

...

Voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means

324. Whoever, except in the case provided for by section 334, voluntarily causes hurt by means of any instrument for shooting, stabbing or cutting, or any instrument which, used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, or by means of fire or any heated substance, or by means of any poison or any corrosive substance, or by means of any explosive substance, or by means of any substance which it is harmful to the human body to inhale, to swallow, or to receive into the blood, or by means of any animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 7 years, or with fine, or with caning, or with any combination of such punishments.

22 In relation to the right of private defence, the relevant statutory provisions are Penal Code ss 96, 97, 98(1) and 101, which provide as follows:

Nothing done in private defence is an offence

96. Nothing is an offence which is done in the exercise of the right of private defence.

Right of private defence of the body and of property

97. Every person has a right, subject to the restrictions contained in sections 98 and 106A, to defend —

(a) his own body, and the body of any other person, against any offence affecting the human body;

(b) the property, whether movable or immovable, of himself or of any other person, against any act which is an offence

falling under the definition of theft, robbery, mischief or criminal trespass, or which is an attempt to commit theft, robbery, mischief or criminal trespass.

Extent to which right may be exercised

98.—(1) The right of private defence does not extend to the inflicting of more harm than it is reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

...

Start and continuance of right of private defence of body

101.—(1) The right of private defence of the body starts as soon as the defender reasonably believes that there is danger to the body (either his own or that of any other person) arising from any act which is an offence against the human body or an attempt or a threat to commit the offence, though the offence may not have been committed.

(2) The right of private defence continues as long as the belief of danger mentioned in subsection (1) continues.

Parties' Arguments

23 The Prosecution submitted that all the elements of the charge under Penal Code s 324 had been made out, because the evidence shows beyond reasonable doubt that the Accused:²⁹

- (a) intended to cause hurt to the Victim;
- (b) in fact caused hurt to the Victim; and
- (c) did so with an instrument (in this case, the Screwdriver) which, used as a weapon of offence, was likely to cause death.

24 In relation to the right of private defence, the Prosecution submitted that:

- (a) First, the Defence did not prove, on the balance of probabilities, that the right of private defence had arisen from a reasonable belief that there was danger to the Accused's body.³⁰

²⁹ Prosecution's Closing Submissions (dated 24 July 2026) ("Prosecution's Closing Submissions") at paragraph 16.

³⁰ Prosecution's Closing Submissions at paragraphs 36 to 45.

- (b) Second, even if the right of private defence had arisen, the Accused had exceeded any such right when he inflicted five puncture wounds on multiple parts of the Victim’s body.³¹

25 The Defence did not deny that the Accused had intended to cause, and in fact caused, hurt to the Victim by stabbing him multiple times with the Screwdriver.³²

26 The Defence’s arguments were as follows:

- (a) The Accused had acted in the exercise of his right to private defence. As such, his actions did not constitute an offence (see Penal Code s 96), as the Accused had not inflicted more harm than reasonably necessary in the circumstances (see Penal Code s 98(1)).³³

- (b) Even if the defence of private defence is not established, the Prosecution has failed to prove that the Screwdriver was, when used as a weapon of offence, likely to cause death (see Penal Code s 324).³⁴ Instead, the Accused should be convicted under a lesser charge premised on Penal Code s 323 for voluntarily causing hurt.³⁵

Overview of Issues

27 In view of the parties’ positions, only two issues remain in dispute:

³¹ Prosecution’s Closing Submissions at paragraph 46.

³² Notes of Evidence (Day 4) p 6 line 2 to p 7 line 19.

³³ Defence’s Closing Submissions (filed on 24 August 2026 but erroneously dated 24 July 2026) (“Defence’s Closing Submissions”) at paragraph 15 to 17.

³⁴ Defence’s Closing Submissions at paragraphs 18 to 21.

³⁵ Defence’s Closing Submissions at paragraph 22.

- (a) Issue 1: Whether the Screwdriver was an instrument which, when used as a weapon of offence, was likely to cause death within the meaning of Penal Code s 324.
- (b) Issue 2: Whether the Accused was acting in the exercise of his right of private defence, which in turn requires consideration of:
 - (i) whether the right of private defence had arisen; and
 - (ii) if so, whether the Accused exceeded that right by inflicting more harm than was reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

Issue 1: The Screwdriver was an instrument which, when used as a weapon of offence, was likely to cause death

28 Both Dr Rajaguru and Dr Oh testified that the injuries caused to the Accused could potentially have been “life-threatening”.³⁶ Dr Rajaguru testified that the areas which the Accused had punctured rendered it a “near miss”, and that had the stab been “a few centimetres below... bigger blood vessels could have [been] damaged, and this could have been a life-threatening issue”.³⁷ Dr Oh testified that he had ordered a CT scan and carotid angiogram of the Victim’s neck in view of the puncture wounds to his neck, to ensure that there was no injury to the deeper structures of the Victim’s neck which may not have been evident on physical examination. Dr Oh testified that had there been injuries to the deeper structures of the Victim’s neck, this would have been a cause for concern because any injury to the “critical structures” which include “the

³⁶ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 6 lines 22 to 29, and p 11 line 20 to p 12 line 2.

³⁷ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 6 lines 22 to 29.

windpipe... the trachea and the oesophagus can potentially be life-threatening”.³⁸

29 The Defence did not dispute the evidence given by Dr Rajaguru and Dr Oh. Rather, the Defence argued that the injuries ultimately sustained by the Victim were not life-threatening.

30 It is undisputed that the injuries sustained by the Victim did not turn out to be life-threatening. That fact, however, does not answer the question of whether the Screwdriver, as used by the Accused as a weapon of offence, was likely to cause death. The combined thrust of both doctors’ testimony was that the puncture wounds inflicted by the Accused with the Screwdriver were near critical structures in the Victim’s body, and that injury to those structures could have been life-threatening. It was ultimately, as Dr Rajaguru put it, a “near miss”.³⁹ The fact that death did not result was a matter of fortuity and not because the Screwdriver, as used by the Accused, was unlikely to cause death. In these circumstances, I am satisfied that the Screwdriver, when used as a weapon of offence and thrust towards the Victim with such force as to inflict multiple puncture wounds in close proximity to vital structures, was an instrument likely to cause death within the meaning of Penal Code s 324.

Issue 2: The Accused was not acting in the exercise of his right of private defence

31 I find that the Accused was not acting in the exercise of his right of private defence because such a right did not arise and, even assuming that it did, he had exceeded that right.

³⁸ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 11 line 20 to p 12 line 2.

³⁹ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 6 lines 22 to 29.

The right of private defence did not arise

32 The right of private defence starts “as soon as the defender reasonably believes that there is danger to the body (either his own or that of any other person) arising from any act which is an offence against the human body or an attempt or threat to commit the offence” and continues “as long as the belief of danger... continues” (Penal Code ss 101(1) and 101(2)). The Defence bears the burden of proving, on a balance of probabilities, that the Accused held such a reasonable belief.

33 Whether the Accused held such a belief turns on what transpired during the physical altercation between the Accused and the Victim. The parties gave materially different accounts of the physical altercation. It is therefore necessary to examine the reliability of those competing accounts.

34 The Victim’s evidence was consistent throughout his testimony.

(a) In relation to the events leading to the physical altercation, the Victim testified that on 29 July 2025 at about 11pm, the Accused called him to tell him that he (*ie*, the Accused) had reached home, and asked the Victim to go to his (*ie*, the Accused’s) house.⁴⁰ The Victim went to the Accused’s house, but the Accused did not open the door, so the Victim went home.⁴¹ The Accused then called the Victim again and asked the Victim to meet at the ground floor of the Accused’s block.⁴²

⁴⁰ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 9 lines 1 to 21.

⁴¹ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 9 lines 1 to 21.

⁴² Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 9 lines 1 to 21.

The Victim did so and saw the Accused at the ground floor of the Accused's block.⁴³ The physical altercation then ensued.

(b) In relation to the physical altercation, the Victim testified that the Accused pushed him, and he pushed the Accused.⁴⁴ The chain that the Accused was wearing got caught in the Victim's hand.⁴⁵ The Accused then took the Screwdriver out of his pocket and, face-to-face with the Victim, stabbed the Victim multiple times.⁴⁶ Under cross-examination, the Victim denied the Defence's suggestion that he (*ie*, the Victim) had approached the Accused aggressively, grabbed the Accused, punched the Accused, put the Accused in a head lock, and chased after the Accused.⁴⁷ He testified that he had never assaulted the Accused, save that he had pushed the Accused after the latter had pushed him first.⁴⁸

35 Beyond asserting that the Victim was not telling the truth, the Defence was unable to identify any material inconsistency in, or otherwise undermine, the evidence or credibility of the Prosecution's witnesses.

36 In contrast, the Accused's own accounts of the events leading to the physical altercation, and – more crucially – the physical altercation itself, evolved over time and was difficult to reconcile with the objective evidence. As will be evident from the following discussion, these were not “minor

⁴³ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 9 lines 1 to 21.

⁴⁴ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 9 line 26, p 13 lines 10 to 19, p 23 lines 9 to 11, 21 to 24, p 24 line 21, p 28 lines 27 to 32, and p 29 lines 3 to 4.

⁴⁵ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 9 line 28 and p 24 lines 21 to 22.

⁴⁶ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 9 lines 28 to 29, p 13 lines 14 to 15 and p 23 lines 10 to 13.

⁴⁷ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 24 line 18 to p 26 line 9.

⁴⁸ Notes of Evidence (Day 1) p 26 lines 4 to 5.

discrepancies [that] should not be held against the witness” (*Jagatheesan s/o Krishnasamy v Public Prosecutor* [2006] 4 SLR(R) 45 at [82]). Rather, they raised serious doubts as to the credibility of the Accused’s account.

37 I first consider the events leading to the physical altercation. In his evidence-in-chief, the Accused testified that the Victim had arrived at his unit with a group of friends and demanded that he open the door.⁴⁹ He further claimed that when the Victim was at the door of the Accused’s unit, he had tried to “send [the Victim and his friends] off”, and that the Victim thereafter sent to him a photo and a video and asked “[t]his is you, right? See what I do to you” and left.⁵⁰ Subsequently, the Victim called him again, asking him to go downstairs.⁵¹ The Accused complied, because he “didn’t want any further trouble”, and wanted to “just get the rental and come up again”.⁵²

38 There are three significant difficulties with this account.

(a) First, these allegations appeared for the first time in the Accused’s evidence at trial. In the Long Statement and Cautioned Statement, the Accused never mentioned the Victim arriving with a group of friends, creating a disturbance outside his unit, sending him a photograph or video, or issuing any threats. If these in fact happened, they would have formed an important part of the context leading to the physical altercation and would reasonably have been expected to feature in the Accused’s account of events to the Police shortly after the incident. The omission is particularly striking given the Accused’s

⁴⁹ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 34 lines 15 to 31; p 44 lines 5 to 31.

⁵⁰ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 34 lines 25 to 31.

⁵¹ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 35 lines 17 to 19.

⁵² Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 35 lines 17 to 26.

ability at trial to recall and recount – unprompted – the specific words allegedly used by the Victim, namely, “[t]his is you, right? See what I do to you”.⁵³

(b) Second, the Accused’s account evolved even during the course of the trial. Under cross-examination, he testified for the first time that after sending the video, the Victim threatened him over a telephone call, indicating that he would “punch” or “attack” him.⁵⁴ Yet, this alleged threat was not only absent from his statements to the Police, but also from his evidence-in-chief given shortly before cross-examination. It was also absent from a statement made by the Accused during the closing submissions, where he said (albeit not under oath) that the video “felt to [him] like a threat” because the Victim appeared to be “trying to identify [him]”, with no further mention of any kind of potential punch or attack.⁵⁵ If the Victim had indeed threatened physical violence against the Accused, one would have expected it to feature in his statements to the Police or his evidence-in-chief.

(c) Third, the allegations concerning the photograph, video and threats allegedly sent or made by the Victim were never put to the Victim when he was on the stand.⁵⁶ The Victim was therefore never afforded an opportunity to confirm, deny or explain the alleged threats.

39 Taken together, the late emergence of these allegations, their absence from the Accused’s earlier accounts, and the fact that key aspects of the

⁵³ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 34 lines 25 to 31.

⁵⁴ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 44 line 22 to p 45 line 23.

⁵⁵ Notes of Evidence (Day 4) p 8 lines 1 to 4.

⁵⁶ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 45 lines 20 to 23.

allegations were not put to the Victim substantially undermine their credibility. I therefore do not accept the Accused's account of the events preceding the physical altercation as outlined in [37] above.

40 Next, I consider the Accused's account of the physical altercation itself. In summary, the Accused testified that:

(a) The Victim had approached him at the fitness corner, held on to his shirt, snatched his chain and tore it off, punched him several times on the right and left sides of his neck, and then held him in a chokehold from behind, with the Accused's back pressed against the Victim's chest.⁵⁷ This chokehold was so tight that he "could not breathe" and "was suffocating", causing him to stab the Victim with the Screwdriver in order to free himself.⁵⁸

(b) The Accused first attempted to free himself using his bare hands, but was unable to do so, and his hands were getting painful.⁵⁹ He therefore resorted to using the Screwdriver against the Victim.⁶⁰

41 There are four difficulties with this account of the physical altercation, of which the first three are particularly significant.

(a) First, the alleged chokehold from behind formed the very foundation of the Accused's case that he reasonably believed there was

⁵⁷ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 35 line 30 to p 36 line 15; p 36 line 31, p 51 line 4 and line 31 to p 42 line 7; p 55 line 22.

⁵⁸ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 35 line 30 to p 36 line 15, p 50 lines 13 to 14.

⁵⁹ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 38 lines 26 to 29.

⁶⁰ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 38 lines 26 to 29.

danger to his person. Yet, it was conspicuously absent from his earlier accounts and emerged for the first time at trial.

(i) In the Long Statement, the Accused said only that the Victim had grabbed the front collar of his shirt and punched him several times on both sides of his neck, that he had used the Screwdriver to “retaliate [the Victim’s] further attacks” by stabbing the Victim’s upper body.⁶¹ There was no mention of a chokehold from behind, let alone one so severe that he could not breathe.

(ii) When the charge was read to him and the Accused invited to state any facts in his defence in the Cautioned Statement, he again did not say anything about a chokehold from behind. Instead, he merely admitted that what he did was wrong and that he would not repeat such actions in the future.⁶²

(iii) Even five months later, the Case for the Defence merely alleged that the Victim had grabbed the Accused’s neck tightly and that the Accused was unable to breathe properly.⁶³ There was no mention about the Accused being held in a chokehold from behind, with his back pressed against the Victim’s chest.

(b) Second, the Accused claimed for the first time, during his examination-in-chief, that he had tried to punch the Victim with his bare

⁶¹ P11 – s 22 Statement (dated 30 July 2025, 2.16pm), response to Q4.

⁶² P12 – s 23 Statement (dated 30 July 2025, 4.10pm).

⁶³ Case for the Defence (dated 2 January 2026) at paragraph 9.

hands until his hands were “getting painful”, and only reached for the Screwdriver after failing to free himself from the Victim.⁶⁴

(i) This important detail, which may have gone towards the reasonableness of the Accused’s use of force, was omitted from the Long Statement, the Cautioned Statement, and the Case for the Defence.⁶⁵ When questioned on his omission to mention this, he said that he had given the same account in his Long Statement. However, the Long Statement itself did not bear this out. On the contrary, the Accused was recorded as saying, in response to a question on why he stabbed the Victim, “[i]f I used my bare hands to hit [the Victim], the impact will not be as powerful. But if I were to hit [the Victim] with the [Screwdriver], it will cause more damage to him”.⁶⁶ When asked to explain the inconsistency, the Accused claimed that his Long Statement had been inaccurately recorded.⁶⁷ However, this allegation was never put to Mr Anparasan under cross-examination.⁶⁸

(ii) The Accused’s allegation that he had tried to punch the Victim before reaching for the Screwdriver was also never put to the Victim when the Victim was on the stand.⁶⁹

(c) Third, the objective evidence supports the Victim’s account and is difficult to reconcile with the Accused’s version of events.

⁶⁴ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 38 lines 26 to 29.

⁶⁵ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 59 lines 3 to 5.

⁶⁶ P11 – s 22 Statement (dated 30 July 2025, 2.16pm), response to Q6.

⁶⁷ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 63 line 32 to p 64 line 21.

⁶⁸ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 63 line 32 to p 64 line 21.

⁶⁹ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 59 lines 4 to 10.

(i) The Victim’s account, namely, that the Accused stabbed him while they were facing each other (see [34(b)] above), is supported by the Accused’s own evidence that he had used his right hand to stab the Victim,⁷⁰ and by the objective medical evidence that the puncture wounds were located on the left side of the Victim’s body.⁷¹ The location of the wounds is consistent with a right-handed assailant stabbing a person when they were facing each other.

(ii) By contrast, it is difficult to reconcile the location of these injuries with the Accused’s account that he had stabbed the Victim while being restrained in a chokehold from behind, with his back pressed against the Victim’s chest, in a position that the Accused had demonstrated in court. In this regard, the Accused accepted under cross-examination that if the Victim’s chest was against his back, it would have been difficult for him to have stabbed the Victim’s chest.⁷² Faced with this difficulty, he then appeared to resile from his earlier evidence that his back had been held against the Victim’s chest,⁷³ although he was unable to explain such a departure. This shift in the Accused’s evidence materially undermines the credibility of his account.

(d) Fourth, and for completeness, the Accused claimed that the Victim had repeatedly punched and forcefully grabbed him around the

⁷⁰ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 36 line 32 to p 37 line 1, and p 52 lines 11 to 13.

⁷¹ P1 – Medical Report dated 11 August 2025.

⁷² Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 52 lines 18 to 23.

⁷³ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 53 lines 18 to 26.

neck,⁷⁴ and that he had punched the Victim until his hands were painful.⁷⁵ Yet, the Accused neither sought medical treatment nor displayed any visible injuries.⁷⁶ I do not place significant weight on this factor. However, it sits uneasily with the severity of the Victim's alleged assault upon the Accused, and provides some limited support for my conclusion that the Accused's account should be approached with caution.

42 Taking these matters together, it becomes evident that the Accused's account evolved over time, becoming more elaborate and increasingly exculpatory. Features that were central to the defence advanced at trial, including the alleged threats and aggression from the Victim, the chokehold from behind and the asserted attempts to free himself with his bare hands before resorting to the Screwdriver, either did not appear in or differed from his earlier accounts. The Accused also altered aspects of his evidence when confronted with objective evidence that was inconsistent with his account, but was unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for those changes. By contrast, the Victim's account is materially more consistent with the objective evidence and was not substantively challenged by the Defence.

43 I therefore do not accept the Accused's account of the events leading to, and during, the physical altercation. The Defence has failed to establish, on a balance of probabilities, that the Accused reasonably believed that there was danger to his body when he stabbed the Victim multiple times with the Screwdriver. Accordingly, the right of private defence did not arise.

⁷⁴ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 65 lines 3 to 12.

⁷⁵ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 38 lines 26 to 29.

⁷⁶ Notes of Evidence (Day 2) p 37 lines 20 to 22 and p 65 lines 13 to 16. See also Statement of Agreed Facts at paragraph 20.

In any event, the Accused exceeded any right of private defence

44 Even if I were to accept the Accused’s latest account of the physical altercation and find that the right of private defence had arisen, I nevertheless find that the Accused exceeded that right as he had inflicted more harm than was reasonably necessary in the circumstances (see Penal Code s 98(1)).

45 On the Accused’s own account, he resorted to stabbing the Victim with the Screwdriver after being unable to loosen the Victim’s grip with his bare hands (whether this was a chokehold from behind or otherwise is unclear, given the Accused’s evolving evidence – see [41(c)] above). The right of private defence would therefore extend to the Accused using such force as reasonably necessary to free himself from the Victim’s grip. Even accepting the Accused’s account at its highest, the force used went well beyond that objective. The Accused inflicted no less than five stab wounds with a pointed implement capable of causing serious or even fatal injury (see [30] above). Significantly, the wounds were inflicted in areas close to vital structures of the Victim’s body. The repeated use of the Screwdriver against areas in close proximity to vital structures was disproportionate to the need to secure his release from the Victim’s grip.

46 This conclusion is reinforced by the Defence’s inability to provide any cogent explanation for why the infliction of multiple stab wounds was reasonably necessary to secure the Accused’s release. When I put this issue to the Defence during the closing submissions, the Defence candidly accepted that it was “[d]ifficult to say why he stabbed him so many times in order to release”.⁷⁷ Indeed, the Defence could do no more than speculate that “[m]aybe he was

⁷⁷ Notes of Evidence (Day 4) p 5 lines 12 to 13.

stabbed maybe one time, maybe he never released, that's why he then stabbed few times".⁷⁸ This does not satisfy the Defence's burden of demonstrating that the repeated stabbing was reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

47 I therefore find that the Accused inflicted more harm than was reasonably necessary and exceeded the limits of the right of private defence.

Conclusion

48 I am satisfied that the Prosecution has proven the charge beyond a reasonable doubt. I reject the Accused's account of the physical altercation and find that the defence of private defence is not made out. In any event, even if the right of private defence had arisen, I would have found that the Accused exceeded that right. Accordingly, I find the Accused guilty and convict him of the charge.



Justin Yeo
District Judge



Mr Mark Chia Zi Han (Attorney-General's Chambers)
for the Prosecution;
Mr Revi Shanker (M/s ARShanker Law Chambers)
for the Accused.

⁷⁸ Notes of Evidence (Day 4) p 5 lines 13 to 15.