

United States Court of Appeals  
For the Eighth Circuit

---

No. 25-1185

---

United States of America

*Plaintiff - Appellee*

v.

Justin Lee Baker

*Defendant - Appellant*

---

Appeal from United States District Court  
for the District of North Dakota - Eastern

---

Submitted: February 5, 2026

Filed: February 11, 2026  
[Unpublished]

---

Before LOKEN, KELLY, and GRASZ, Circuit Judges.

---

PER CURIAM.

Justin Baker, who was counseled below but is now proceeding pro se, appeals after he pleaded guilty to sex abuse offenses and the district court<sup>1</sup> sentenced him to life in prison. On appeal, Baker challenges the sentence.

Upon careful review, we conclude that the district court did not impose a substantively unreasonable sentence, as the court properly considered the factors listed in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) and did not err in weighing the relevant factors. See United States v. Feemster, 572 F.3d 455, 461-62 (8th Cir. 2009) (en banc) (standard of review). While the district court's imposition of a life sentence was a substantial variance from the Guidelines range, we conclude that the significant upward variance was justified in particular by the need for the sentence to reflect the seriousness of the offense and to protect the public from further crimes, given the heinousness of Baker's conduct and his pattern of similar behavior. See United States v. Mangum, 625 F.3d 466, 469-70 (8th Cir. 2010); Feemster, 572 F.3d at 461-62.

Accordingly, we affirm.

---

---

<sup>1</sup>The Honorable Peter D. Welte, Chief Judge, United States District Court for the District of North Dakota.