

Three to die by hanging for killing Rivers pharmacist

March 14, 2026 12:41 am



File photo: Court gavel

| By Dennis Naku

A Rivers State High Court, sitting in Port Harcourt, has sentenced three persons to death by hanging for the murder of a pharmacist, Muenalo Sunday, in Khana Local Government Area of the state.

The convicts, Confidence Kirinee (General Ilia), Precious Mona, and Soniabari Sagha, were found guilty of conspiracy, cultism, kidnapping, and murder.

Justice Augusta Chukwu, who delivered the judgment on Friday, also sentenced another cultist, Loveday Legah, to life imprisonment for belonging to a secret cult whose activities led to the killing of the victim.

The judge held that the prosecution successfully proved the charges against the convicts beyond reasonable doubt.

According to the court, the convicts, who were members of the 'Iceland' secret cult group, conspired to kidnap and murder the pharmacist on March 5, 2019, in Zaakpo community, Khana LGA.

The judge ruled that evidence presented before the court, including confessional statements, showed that the suspects killed the victim, severed his head and other sensitive body parts, and dumped his remains in a pit. She added that the severed head was allegedly taken to a shrine located in a bush in a neighbouring community.

Justice Chukwu consequently sentenced Kirinee, Mona, and Sagha to death by hanging, while Legah was sentenced to life imprisonment for his involvement in cult activities linked to the crime.

Speaking to journalists after the ruling, the Chief State Counsel in the Rivers State Ministry of Justice, Preye Ordu, commended the court for what he described as a thorough judgment.

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“The judgment today is a good one. We commend the judge for the thorough job she has done. It has been a long and hectic trial from when we started until today,” he said.

Ordu added that the verdict would restore hope to the victim’s family.

“It will restore hope to the victim’s family who had feared they might not get justice. Today, justice has been served for both the living and the dead,” he said.

Also reacting to the judgment, the widow of the deceased pharmacist, Pretty Neewa-Sunday, expressed relief that those responsible for her husband’s death had been punished.

“They have reaped what they sowed because they killed my husband who did nothing wrong,” she said.

The widow, who disclosed that she is a sickle cell patient, said her late husband had been her major source of support.

“My pain is that I am a sickler and my husband was the one taking care of me. Now I have become a widow, something neither of us ever planned for,” she added.