

Tricycle operator sentenced to death for murder in Anambra

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File: Court gavel

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A High Court sitting in Anambra State and presided over by Justice Laurretta Oyeka has sentenced a commercial tricycle rider, Makua Ezike, to death by hanging after finding him guilty of murdering one Jude Onwuegbuchunam, an indigene of Umuoji in the Idemili North Local Government Area of the state.

According to the charge sheet obtained by our correspondent on Monday, the offence was committed on November 17, 2019, along the Oba-Obosi-Nkpor-Umuoji Road.

Ezike was said to have been using his tricycle alongside other gang members for a “one-chance” robbery operation.

The defendant and two members of his gang, who are still at large, while posing as a commercial tricycle rider and passengers, picked up an unsuspecting Onwuegbuchunam and, midway into the journey, attempted to rob him of his phone and other valuables.

When Onwuegbuchunam resisted and raised the alarm, Ezike and his gang members pushed him out of the high-speed moving tricycle near Abidi Hall, Umuoji, where Umuoji Vigilante operatives were stationed.

The vigilante operatives, it was also gathered, gave the “one-chance” robbery syndicate a hot chase, leading to Ezike abandoning the tricycle and fleeing with the other members of his gang.

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He was said to have returned the next day to the scene where he had abandoned the tricycle and was subsequently arrested by the vigilante operatives, who later handed him over to the police, where he confessed to the crime.

The victim, Onwuegbuchunam, who sustained fatal injuries, died two days later.

However, the prosecution called five witnesses, including the medical doctor who conducted the post-mortem examination on Onwuegbuchunam and confirmed that his death resulted directly from the injuries he sustained in the fall.

Though the defence argued that there was no eyewitness, Justice Oyeka held that the law recognises three pathways to conviction: direct eyewitness evidence, confessional statements, and circumstantial evidence.

The judge, however, noted that in this case, the circumstantial evidence was overwhelming, ranging from the abandoned tricycle to Ezike’s disappearance from the scene, his voluntary confession, and the medical evidence linking the victim’s injuries and death to his actions.

The court, therefore, convicted Ezike of murder and ordered that he be put to death by hanging.