

Rivers Court adjourns murder trial of pastor to January

From **Obinna Nwaoku**, Port Harcourt

ARIVERS State High Court sitting in Port Harcourt, yesterday, adjourned continuation of trial of the General Overseer of Altar of Solutions and Healing Assembly in Oyigbo council, Chidiebere Okoroafor, to January 19, 2023. Okoroafor was alleged to have murdered his choir mistress, Olumma Nwagba, who he allegedly impregnated, alongside her daughter, Chigozie Ezenwa and Christabel Ezenwa, who accompanied the late choir mistress to the pastor's

house.

At the continuation of trial, yesterday, an investigative police officer, Inspector Dan Promise, told the court that they found the dead bodies of the victims at different locations within Eberi in Afam area of Oyigbo, where the church is located. Okoroafor, who spoke from the witness box, during cross-examination by the state prosecution officer, Precious Odu, denied any involvement in the murder of the victims. The accused said he was happily married with three

Orders DSS to pay N20m to victim for unlawful arrest, detention

children and does not have any reason to impregnate any other girl. After listening to parties, Justice S.O Benson adjourned to January 19, 2023 for continuation of cross-examination of the witnesses.

MEANWHILE, Justice E. N. Thompson of a Rivers State High Court, Port Harcourt, has ordered the Department of State Security (DSS) to pay the sum of N20 million as damages to one Richard Abe over his

unlawful arrest and detention by the secret police.

Abe, a surveillance contractor, had dragged DSS to court for enforcement of his fundamental human rights against the government agency over an unlawful arrest and detention, which occurred in July 2022.

Delivering her judgment, Justice Thompson, agreed with the plaintiff that DSS detained him beyond the stipulated time, thereby infringing on his fundamental human right.

Justice Thompson also ordered the DSS to tender an unreserved apology to Abe on a national daily and placed a restraining order on the DSS from carrying out further arrest of the applicant.

Speaking outside the court, the plaintiff counsel, Ajayi Olusegun, described the judgment as justice for the common man that will serve as deterrence to security agencies, to desist from carrying out unlawful arrest

He said: "It is a lesson to the law enforcement agencies because a citizen of this country is entitled to his fundamental rights as guaranteed by the Constitution. "The court has also ordered the DSS to tender a written apology and publish it in Newspapers within 30 days from the day of this judgment to the applicant."

On his part, Kingsley Briggs, who represented the state attorney general said the judgment will discourage arbitrary arrest of innocent citizens by security agencies.