

Rivers State Court Sentences Two To Death For Kidnapping, Murder

From Obinna Nwaoku, Port Harcourt

• Discharges And Acquits One For Lack Of Evidence

RIVERS State High Court sitting in Port Harcourt has convicted and sentenced two middle-aged men to death by hanging for kidnapping and killing a prominent Rivers State businessman, Festus Mac-Pepple and one Friday Uranta in 2008.

The trial judge, Justice Danagogo, in his judgment, convicted and sentenced Orong Orong Philips and Elisha Robert, while discharging Ishmael Ogwujan.

Ogwujan was discharged and acquitted for lack of evi-

dence to link him to the crime.

The convicted persons were said to have killed their victims and buried them in a shallow grave in Bayelsa State before they were arrested by the security agencies in 2008.

Speaking outside the courtroom, the Prosecuting Council of the state, Anthony Oma-Wamah, described the judgment as "justice for humanity."

Oma-Wamah, who is also a Public Prosecutor in the state Ministry of Justice, said the convicts were sentenced on a

three-count charge, adding that the duo were indicted by counts two and three, which are capital offences and Count One, which carries a 10-year sentence.

He said: "I feel happy that Philip has been convicted to death for killing Uranta and Festus Mac-Pepple. Both Orong and Robert were sentenced to death for Count Two and Count Three and 10 years imprisonment for Count One.

"The 10 years of imprisonment, which was the prevail-

ing law at the time the crime was committed, because at that time, the Rivers State Anti-kidnapping Law had not been passed and they were convicted under the Criminal Code.

"The third defendant, Ishmael Ogwujan, was discharged because there was no sufficient evidence to link him to the crime, but he knew about the crime. They informed him about the kidnap but he told the court that he did not take part in it. So the judgment is justice to humanity."