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Court Sentences Police Corporal To Death For Killing 3-Year-Old Girl

LE Thu, 27/09/2012 - 3:15pm | AGENCY REPORT
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An Ikeja High Court in Lagos on Thursday sentenced an ex-police corporal, Ikechukwu Nwabueze, to death by hanging for killing a three-year-old girl, Kasufara Muritala.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Justice Olabisi Akinlade, found the 35-year-old former policeman guilty of the murder charge preferred against him.

Nwabueze, who was arraigned on June 15, 2010 by the Lagos State Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP), had pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Mrs Olabisi Ogungbesan, the Director of Public Prosecution, said that Nwabueze on April 5, 2009 at a police check-point at Ketu-Alapere, Lagos, shot at a Nissan Sunny car conveying the deceased and her parents.

Ogungbesan said that the incident occurred at Obanle Aro bus stop, Ketu-Alarape at about 9.30 pm when Kasufara and her parents were returning from a naming ceremony.

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She said the father of the deceased, Saliu Muritala, was hit on his hand while the little girl, who was sitting on the back sit with her mother, was shot in the head.

The DPP said the five policemen from Alarepe Police Station, including Nwabueze, fled from the check-point after the father came out of the car with the lifeless body of the deceased.

In her judgment, Akinlade held that the prosecution proved its case against Nwabueze beyond reasonable doubt.

She said the defendant in his confessional statement to the police after his arrest, had admitted shooting at the rear of the car but not with the intent to kill the deceased.

The judge held that Nwabueze's attempt to deny that the statement was not made ``voluntarily as an after-thought aimed at misleading the court.

``It is trite law that a confessional statement of a defendant is relevant and should not be discarded merely on the basis that he had retracted the statement during trial," the judge said.

Akinlade said the testimony of Prof. John Obafunwa, Chief Pathologists, Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), who conducted the autopsy on the deceased, was not contradicted during the trial.

The judge said Obafunwa had testified that the cause of death was as a result of missile injuries to Kasufara's skull.

She said the ballistic report presented by another witness, Sgt. Tamimu Jerimiah, confirmed that the deceased was killed from the bullet fired from an Ak-47 rifle calibre 7.62 mm, assigned to Nwabueze.

Akinlade said: ``if indeed he shot the car in the rear, the bullet would not have hit the occupants of the car.

``In my view, by virtue of the defendants training as a police officer, he cannot claim that he did not know the probable consequences of his action.

``I, therefore, hold that the defendant had the intention to kill or cause grievous bodily harm to the occupants of the car when he fired at the back windscreen of the car.

``I find him guilty as charged."

The judge also dismissed an appeal by Nwabueze's

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counsel, Mr A.O. Omodele, for the court to temper justice with mercy and be lenient in its sentence.

She noted that the defendant had murdered the little girl in cold blood, stressing that it was a clear example of recklessness being perpetrated by policemen on innocent citizens.

“Only God knows what, Kasufara Muritala, would have become in future. I hope members of the Nigerian Police will learn a lesson from him and stop extra-judicial killings.

“The sentence of the court upon you Nwabueze is that you be hanged by the neck until you are dead and may the Lord have mercy on your soul.” (NAN)

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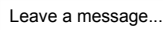
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