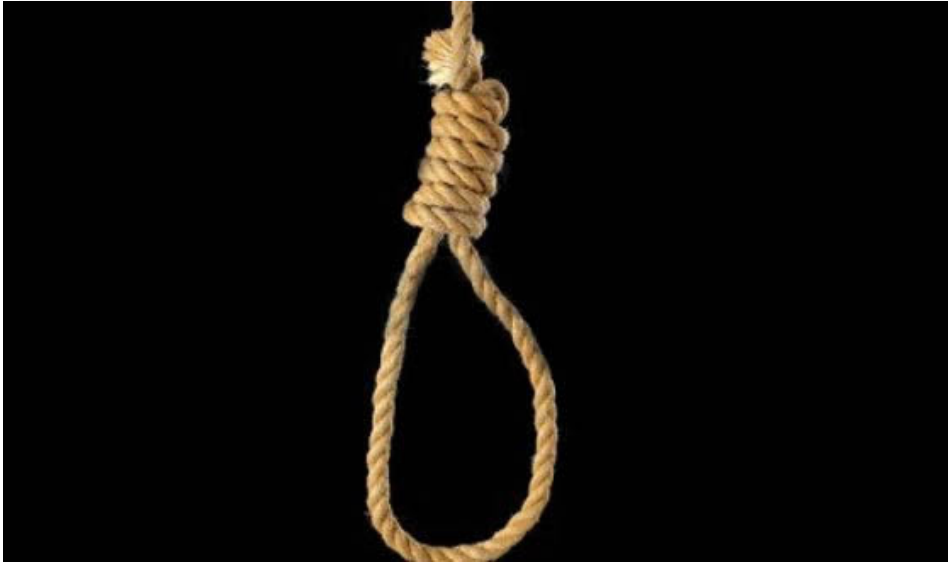


Court sentences man to death for killing neighbour

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The Akwa Ibom State High Court, sitting in Eket, has sentenced one Okon Ebenge to death by hanging for killing his neighbour, Eteyen Ekong, over N80,000.

The presiding judge, Justice Nsemeke Daniel, on Wednesday passed the death sentence on Ebenge from Akpautong in the Esit Eket Local Government Area for conspiring with his son, Akaninyene, to kill his 37-year-old neighbour when he demanded the refund of N80,000.

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Ekong, a native of Ntak Inyang in Esit Eket, was said to have given the convict N80,000 in 2013 to construct a container shade for his business.

It was learnt that the convict did not construct the container and refused to refund the money to Ebenge, prompting the deceased to go to Ebenge's house for his money on January 10, 2016, where he was beaten to death by the convict and his son, who escaped.

A medical report was said to have been admitted as exhibit before the court.

The report was said to have shown that father and son used machete and a pinch bar to hit the deceased, which caused fractured skull, leading to damage to his brain tissue.

A neighbor of the deceased, Abednego Owo, who was the third prosecution witness, told the court that he tried to rescue the victim, but was prevented by the convict and his son who threatened to kill anyone who entered their house.

In his judgement, Justice Daniel said, "The law is trite that when any person aids the commission of an offence by being at the scene not as an onlooker but with the purpose of assisting any other person in committing the offence; he is equally guilty of the offence as a principal."

He ruled that the death of the deceased was accelerated by the convict who prevented sympathisers from taking the deceased to a hospital while he was still breathing even though unconscious.

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"In my view, the specific act of using a machete to chase away people from entering his compound to rescue the victim was a manifestation of his intention to ensure that the man was dead," Daniel said.

He sentenced Ebenge to death for murder on count one, while on count two, he was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment.