

# Rape: Suspect retracts guilty plea after pregnant daughter, uncle, helpers die

**Published** January 29, 2019



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A native doctor, Jacob Alonge, who was accused of impregnating his own daughter, Gift, has retracted his guilty plea.

The 54-year-old, who was to be sentenced after pleading guilty to charges of incest, reportedly changed his plea after the news that his 17-year-old daughter had died in an accident on the way to a

magistrates' court in Benin City, Edo State.

Among those who also died in the ill-fated vehicle were Gift's uncle, Mr Ukere Adagbogu; a worker with a non-governmental organisation, BraveHeart Initiative for Youth and Women, Ms Promise Ezekiel; and the driver, Paul Opashi.

Another worker with the NGO, Ms Rhoda Braimoh, who was in a critical condition, was reported to have also given up the ghost, bringing the casualty figure to five.

PUNCH *Metro* had reported that Gift and her father lived in Ososo, Akoko-Edo area of Edo State.

Jacob, who was said to possess diabolical powers, was alleged to have aborted the first pregnancy that resulted from the incest in 2017, using herbal concoctions.

The second pregnancy was said to have caught the attention of the local vigilante group, which handed him over to the traditional ruler of the Ososo community.

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At the Ososo Police Station, Jacob allegedly made a confessional statement, as the case was transferred to the family unit of the state Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Benin City.

A scan was said to have revealed that Gift was 21 weeks pregnant.

The police subsequently arraigned the suspect before a family court at the Evbuoraria Magistrates' Court, Benin, where he pleaded guilty to the charges in December 2018.

On January 16, 2019, the day the suspect was to be sentenced, the pregnant Gift, her uncle, workers of the NGO who were helping her, the driver and the leader of the community vigilante group were

involved in a fatal accident at Ewu, Edo State.

The judgment was reportedly suspended when the news of the tragedy got to the attention of the court.

Shaken by the incident, the NGO also shut down operations.

Our correspondent learnt that when the matter came up on January 16, 2019, Jacob changed his plea from guilty to not guilty.

The founder of BraveHeart, Ms Priscilla Usiobaifo, in a statement on Sunday, said only justice would assuage the hurt of the organisation.

Usiobaifo added, “They (victims) died on the field, while serving humanity. They sacrificed their lives to ensure that justice is obtained for a young girl (Gift Alonge, now demised), whose father had sexually abused and serially assaulted for years and even impregnated on multiple occasions.

“The BHI hereby calls for justice for Gift Alonge, as the accused (Jacob Alonge), changed his plea from guilty to not guilty after learning about his daughter’s death, as well as the death of other key witnesses.

“I urge all civil rights activists, feminist sisters, NGO colleagues and the Akoko-Edo community, especially the Ososo people, to rise to the occasion and demand the much-desired justice.”

The Chairman, Board of Trustees of the organisation, Grace Osakue, said the NGO did not believe that the accident was connected to Jacob’s alleged diabolical powers, adding that it was a mere coincidence.

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*PUNCH Metro* learnt that the case had been adjourned till February 14, 2019.