

Court sentences Beninese to death for killing employer's mother

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Igbosere High Court

Oluwatosin Omojuyigbe

Justice Oluwatoyin Ipaye of the Lagos State High Court in Igbosere, on Monday, sentenced a Beninese domestic help, Christian Yavine, to death for killing his employer's 78-year-old mother, Mariam Abiola.

The judge found 23-year-old Yavine guilty of severing Abiola's head with a knife while she slept in her daughter's residence in the Ipaja area of Lagos on July 1, 2014.

It was gathered that the convict's employer, Ajoke Abiola, had gone to a vigil in a church when the incident happened.

Delivering her judgment on Monday, Justice Ipaye, who noted that there was ample corroborative evidence to disprove Yavine's claim, dismissed his defence that he was 14 years old at the time of the offence.

The judge noted that the evidence showed that Yavine was seeking admission into a university and would have registered to sit an entrance examination, but was unable to because of financial challenges at the time of the incident, adding that it was unlikely that the defendant was seeking university admission at the age of 14.

She stated further that the birth certificate obtained by the Lagos State Government from Yavine's alleged birth hospital in the Benin Republic showed that he was born in 1996.

The judge said, "Yavine had lived with the deceased for two weeks before the incident, during which he also went to the market with her. I wonder what language he spoke to her if he truly did not understand English.

"The deceased was caught by the doctrine of last seen and Yavine was the only one with Abiola while she was alive on the night of June 30 and in the early hours of July 1, 2014, when she was found dead. He was thus the last person to see her alive and the first person to see her dead.

"The doctrine of last seen requires that a person charged with murder, who was the last person seen with the deceased, should offer some explanation as to how the deceased met his/her death, which the defendant was not able to do."

Pronouncing judgement, Justice Ipaye held that the prosecution had proved the case of murder against Yavine beyond reasonable doubt and consequently sentenced him to death by hanging.

She said, "The defendant is hereby found guilty and convicted of the murder of madam Mariam Abiola.

"You, Christian Yavine, is hereby sentenced to death by hanging. May God, the giver of life, have mercy on you."

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