

3 Judge dismisses plea bargain, jails killing wife

Babatunde Titilola

THE Lagos State High Court sitting at the Tafawa Balewa Square has sentenced a man, Daniel Gajo, to 21 years' imprisonment for stabbing his 24-year-old wife, Esther, to death.

Gajo had initially pleaded not guilty to one count of involuntary manslaughter during his arraignment and was remanded on June 13, 2013.

The prosecution said the act was contrary to Section 227 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

At the resumed hearing on Thursday before Justice Yetunde Adesanya, the prosecution, led by Olayemi Shofolu, informed the court that the defendant had decided to plead guilty to the charge.

He submitted the plea bargain and sentencing agreement signed by the defence counsel and prayed the court to grant the 17 years' jail term as recommended in the agreement.

The defence counsel, S.N. Nwodo, confirmed the arrangement with the



• Justice Adesanya

prosecution.

Gajo also confirmed the agreement under oath and told the court that he was not compelled to change his plea for a reduced sentence.

The amended charge was read and he pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter contrary to Section 227 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

However, Justice Adesanya said she was not impressed with the plea

bargain due to the severity of the crime.

She said, "The defendant took his wife's life in her mother's home. I am not bound by the sentencing agreement and can decide to increase the years. No one has the right to take another person's life."

Passing her judgment, the judge said the recommended sentence was not commensurate to the crime committed by the defendant.

She noted that the crime was

"unprovoked and premeditated."

Adesanya said, "I have taken into account the statements of the parties. I also recognise that the court is not bound to accept the sentencing agreement. In view of this, I hereby convict you, Daniel Gajo, as charged. Having regard to all considerations, this court rejects the 17 years sentencing agreement. I hereby sentence you, Daniel Gajo, to 21 years in prison starting from the day of your remand, June 13, 2013."

Judgements premised on plea bargain agreements have resulted in controversies in the country's legal system.

In September 2021, Justice Oluwatoyin Taiwo of the Ikeja Special Offences Court also sentenced a 23-year-old chef, Joshua Usulor, to 28 years' imprisonment for killing a 34-year-old lawyer, Mrs Fevisayo Obot, in a hotel room in Lagos on January 26, 2019.

Usulor had entered a plea bargain agreement with the prosecution and a 21-year sentence was recommended.

However, the judge rejected the agreement, saying it was too lenient and sentenced the convict to 28 years in prison.

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Despite the increase in the jail term, many observers said the sentence was light and called for

tougher punishments for capital offences to serve as deterrent to others.

I was defrauded of N36m after m

Segun Adewole
with agency report

AN 88-year-old woman, Tawakalitu Ilumoka, has told Justice Mojisola Dada of the Special Offences Court sitting at Ikeja, Lagos State, how she was allegedly defrauded of N36m by one Olorunfemi Ayodeji.

According to her, Ayodeji introduced her to some people when she informed him that her son based in the United States of America was sick.

She said this was after she sold a piece of land for N100m out of which she gave Ayodeji N100,000.

She said, "I called Otunba (Ayodeji) and told him about my son's health challenge. He said I had to bring him to Ondo State.

"Though I complained that Ondo is some distance from Lagos, I agreed because he insisted my son could only be

treated in Ondo.

"He, therefore, linked me up with some persons, namely Fakunle and Fabummi."

Ilumoka said Fakunle and Fabunmi took her to a place where she met a woman, whom they said was a river goddess.

She said, "They eventually took me to a thick bush, where there was a well-fenced house. I was scared and I asked them why I was brought there.

"They then led me to a room in the house, filled with a pool of water. A woman came out of the water and they told me she was Olokun (river goddess).

"I was asked to lower my head and was warned not to look at the goddess in the face.

"They said Olokun wanted to give me money, but I declined, insisting that all I wanted was for my son to recover from the illness.

"I couldn't comprehend all that Olokun was saying, so they were