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Court sentences 3 to death for murder, kidnapping

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Romanus Okoye

Justice Oluwatoyin Taiwo of Lagos High Court, Ikeja, yesterday, sentenced three men to death for kidnapping a Lagos traditional ruler, killing his palace guard and a motorcyclist.

The convicts, Duba Fureso, Reuben Anthony and Yerin Fresh, who kidnapped the Oniba of Iba, Oba Oseni Goriola, murdered a motorcyclist, Mr. Joseph Okeke, a 72-year-old palace guard, Mr. Sunday Okanlawon, and attempted to murder the traditional ruler's wife, Bosede.

The convicts were sentenced to death for murder, life sentence for attempted murder, 21 years imprisonment for kidnap and various prison terms for conspiracy to murder, conspiracy to commit armed robbery and armed robbery.

Taiwo said: "The prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and established the ingredients of all the offences. I find the defendants guilty as charged. A clear message should be sent to kidnappers and murderers."



The judge noted that the victims and their families were usually traumatised and asked to pay very high ransoms.

During the trial, the prosecution led by Ms Titilayo Shitta-Bey, Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Justice, had submitted that the convicts and others still at large, committed the offences on July 16, 2016 at 6.00pm at the palace of the traditional ruler in Lagos. According to her, the convicts stormed the palace with guns, shot the traditional ruler's wife in the abdomen, fired several shots into the air and killed Okanlawon and Okeke.

“The Oba was taken through a boat to the kidnappers' camp and demand for N500 million ransom was made to his family. It was negotiated and N15.1million paid. The Oba spent three weeks with his abductors,” she said.

The kidnappers were, however, apprehended by members of the Inspector-General of Police Intelligence Response Team (IRT). During the trial, seven witnesses testified for the

prosecution, including the traditional and his wife, his son, two medical doctors and two police officers. The defendants, Fureso, a timber contractor; Fresh, a fisherman, and Reuben, a timber contractor, testified for the defence, denying committing the offences.

During allocutus, the defence counsel, Mr G. O. Eguaroje, pleaded for leniency for the convicts. “They are first-time offenders and are all family men. We shall plead to your lordship to be lenient with them and not sentence them to death. Finally, we shall try to exercise our right to appeal,” Eguaroje said. However, Shitta-Bey asked the judge to impose the stiffest sentences to serve as a deterrent to such crimes. “I urge the honourable court to impose the maximum sentences prescribed for the offences in law. The heinous crime of kidnapping does not only terrorize the victim, it terrorizes the society; nobody is safe. A clear statement should be made that Lagos State has zero tolerance for kidnappers, murderers and robbers,” she said.

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