

Lagos Virtual Court Session: Court sentences driver to death by hanging over murder of employer's mother

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Olalekan Hameed, the convict.

By Onozure Dania

A driver, Olalekan Hameed, was yesterday, sentenced to death by hanging by an Ikeja High Court in the first virtual court sitting held by a Lagos court as part of social distancing measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The judgement was delivered by Justice Mojisola Dada after finding the convict guilty of the offence of stealing and murder, preferred against him by Lagos State government.

Hameed was found guilty for the December 1, 2018 murder of 76-year-old Mrs Jolasun Okunsanya, the mother of his employer, Adetayo.

The proceedings were approved by the Chief Judge of Lagos State, Justice Kazeem Alogba, in line with the Lagos State Judiciary Remote Hearing of Cases COVID-19 Pandemic Period Practice Direction.

The court session for the charge marked ID/9006C/2019, held online via a video app, Zoom, began at 11 am and ended before 2 pm.

The judge, defendant, his team of counsel, the prosecution team led by Lagos State Solicitor-General, Ms Titilayo Shitta-Bey, and all witnesses participated in the session remotely from different locations via the Zoom app.

Hameed was arraigned on March 6, 2019, on a two-count charge of murder and stealing on Charge No. ID/9006C/2019.

The court heard that he committed the offence at about 12:30 pm at Plot 83, Owukori Crescent, Alaka Estate, Surulere, Lagos.

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The convict pleaded not guilty, following which trial commenced.

The prosecution called several witnesses and tendered exhibits, including the coroner's report, stolen N97,500 and \$117 recovered from the defendant and a confessional statement, among others.

"The only money I took was the N1,000, any other money I don't know about it. I did not kill Mrs Jolaso Ogunsanya," Hakeem told the judge during the trial.

But Justice Dada noted that prosecution witnesses testimonies that Hakeem was the only one with the deceased at the time of death and was also seen scaling the fence of the deceased's building afterwards, among others, were not disproved.

She said: "It is also an established fact that although the defendant went to the house of the crime to steal, the surprise of the deceased stumbling upon him led him to not just pushing the deceased, but actually strangulating her in a bid to keep her from crying out.

“The case is clear. I have not found any contradiction with the evidence of the prosecution witness that can be deemed material or weighty enough to cast any doubt on the case of the prosecution against the defendant in this case. The facts of the case are incompatible with the innocence of the defendant but rather his guilt on the two counts.

The pronouncement

“... the defendant is hereby found guilty of this count two of murder and is hereby convicted as charged and accordingly sentenced to death.

“The sentence of this court upon you, Olalekan Hameed, is that you be hanged by the neck until you be pronounced dead and may the Lord have mercy upon your soul. This is the virtual judgment of the court.”

Top members of the Judiciary and Ministry of Justice also participated in the proceedings virtually.