Court sentences BRT driver to death for rape, murder

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A Lagos High Court at Tafawa Balewa Square, on Friday, sentenced a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) driver, Andrew Ominikoron, to death by hanging for the murder of his passenger, Oluwabamise Ayanwola.  
  
Mr Ominikoron was arraigned for rape ad murder of a 22-year-old fashion designer, Ms Ayanwola, who boarded his BRT bus on 26 February 2022.  
  
Justice Sherifat Sonaike found Mr Ominikoron guilty of murder and attempted rape of Anyawola.  
  
She also found the convict guilty of raping Nneka Udezulu and sexually assaulting Victoria Anosike, who had boarded his bus on separate occasions.  
  
Ms Sonaike said: “On count one, which is offence of raping Nneka Udezulu, Ominikoron, is sentenced to life imprisonment.  
  
“For count three, attempted rape of Anyawola, you are sentenced to 14 years imprisonment.  
  
“For count five, offence of sexual assault on Dr Victoria Anosike, you are sentenced to three years imprisonment.  
  
“On count four, which is the offence of murder of Oluwabamise Ayanwola; having been found guilty of murder, a capital offence pursuant to Section 301 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law, the defendant is hereby sentenced to death.  
  
“You will be hanged by the neck until you be dead. May God have mercy on your soul,” she held.  
  
The judge held that the prosecution proved its case beyond a reasonable doubt.  
  
According to her, the prosecution, through its witnesses, proved that the act of the defendant (Ominikoron) caused the death of the deceased (Anyawola).  
  
She said that the voice recording of the deceased, which she sent to her friend while inside the defendant’s bus, would be admitted as a dying declaration.  
  
The judge said that the deceased’s voice recording was made when she felt she was in imminent danger due to the behaviour of the defendant.  
  
She also said that Ms Anyawola’s voice recording and the pieces of evidence given by the prosecution witnesses on the habit of the defendant in picking up unsuspecting passengers in a lonely area and sexually molesting them, even with threat and force, showed that the defendant was a serial rapist.  
  
“All the circumstantial evidence, coupled with the defendant’s refusal to report the matter to his office and his running away to a remote village before his arrest, shows a guilty mind.  
  
“I find the ingredient of murder established beyond all reasonable doubt,” Ms Sonaike held.  
  
The judge said that the defendant lied throughout his defence.  
  
She said that the fact that the defendant said he regretted the death of Ms Anyawola was to play sentiment to the court.  
  
Ms Sonaike said: “The fact that the defendant committed these offences within three months interval shows that maybe there are more victims who because of shame failed to come forward.  
  
“The defendant used his employment to rape unsuspecting passengers. This is an unforgivable crime.  
  
“This case is an eye opener. There is need for government to overhaul the recruitment standard so that parents will be assured when their young girl board a vehicle.”  
  
The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the prosecution called nine witnesses, while Mr Ominikoron was the sole witness for the defence.  
  
The Lagos State Government had charged him with a five-count bordering on conspiracy, rape, attempted rape and murder, to which he pleaded not guilty.  
  
He was arraigned on 22 March 2022 for the rape and murder of his 22-year-old passenger on 26 February 2022, at the Lekki-Ajah Expressway.  
  
The prosecution also said that the defendant also raped one Nneka Udezulu and sexually assaulted one Victoria Anosike along Ikorodu Mile 12 axis of Lagos State.  
  
The prosecution said that the offences committed contravened Sections 411, 223, 260, and 165 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.  
  
(NAN)