

2 convicted for murder of student

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KAMPALA. Two men were yesterday found guilty of murdering Andrew Gatara, a mechanical engineering student of University of British Columbia in Canada who was killed in Kampala on New Year eve of 2015.

Ronald Mutebi and Geoffrey Lubwama, alias Jeff, were convicted for murder and aggravated robbery.

Trial judge Flavia Anglin Senoga said prosecution had proved the duo's evil mission to rob revellers as they welcomed 2015 and that Gatara, 19, fell victim. The murder happened on Nile Avenue shortly after Gatara had watched New Year fireworks display at Kampala Serena Hotel.

"It is evident that the two accused persons set out to go and rob revellers on New Year's Eve. Unfortunately, it was the deceased (Gatara) who fell to their evil plan. They attacked him and caused him fatal injuries. A telephone and unspecified sum of money were taken away from him. None of them dissociated themselves from the attack of the deceased," ruled Justice Senoga.

"The joint opinion of the court assessors found that the prosecution had proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and advised me to convict them on both counts. I have found no reason to disagree with their opinion. The accused persons are, therefore, found guilty of murder and aggravated robbery. Each one of them is convicted as charged," she announced.

Justice Senoga reserved the sentencing until next Monday and sent the convicts back to Luzira prison. Murder and aggravated robbery carry up to a maximum penalty of death.

The father of the deceased, Mr Tom Gatara, an accountant in Kampala, briefly said: "Finally justice has been done though it will not bring back my beloved son."

Spirited defence

During trial, defence lawyers had submitted that the prosecution case was hinged on the confession statement of the suspects, which was extracted forcibly using torture.

The defence lawyers further argued that the prosecution evidence had many inconsistencies, which could only be resolved by acquitting the accused. They cited the confession statement of Mutebi, the key suspect, which indicated that his co-accused now convict Lubwama strangled the deceased yet the post-mortem report showed the cause of death was injury occasioned by a blunt object.

However, Justice Senoga observed that the inconsistencies cited by the defence side were minor and would not affect the substance of the prosecution evidence.