

The businessman, who has been in prison for over a decade, insists he's innocent. He lauds President Museveni for considering his appeal.

BY JOB BWIRE
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The proprietor of Pine Car Bond in Kampala, Mr Muhammad Ssebuwufu, who was convicted in 2019 for the October 21, 2015, kidnap, aggravated robbery and murder of a client, Betty Donah Katusabe, has been released from prison following a presidential pardon.

Mr Ssebuwufu was initially sentenced to 40 years in prison, but in a 2025 ruling, a panel of three Court of Appeal Justices reduced his sentence to 3 years after re-evaluating the evidence and finding that the sentence by the lower court was too harsh.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank President Museveni for finally considering my appeal... Who am I! I will continue doing what I was doing. I want to let my clients know I'm back in business as usual. I forgive all those who falsely accused me. I also thank Donah's family for listening to my pleas and asking them to make me part of their family," he said after his release.

Mr Ssebuwufu's release comes barely three years after the Supreme Court in Kampala upheld his 18-year jail sentence.

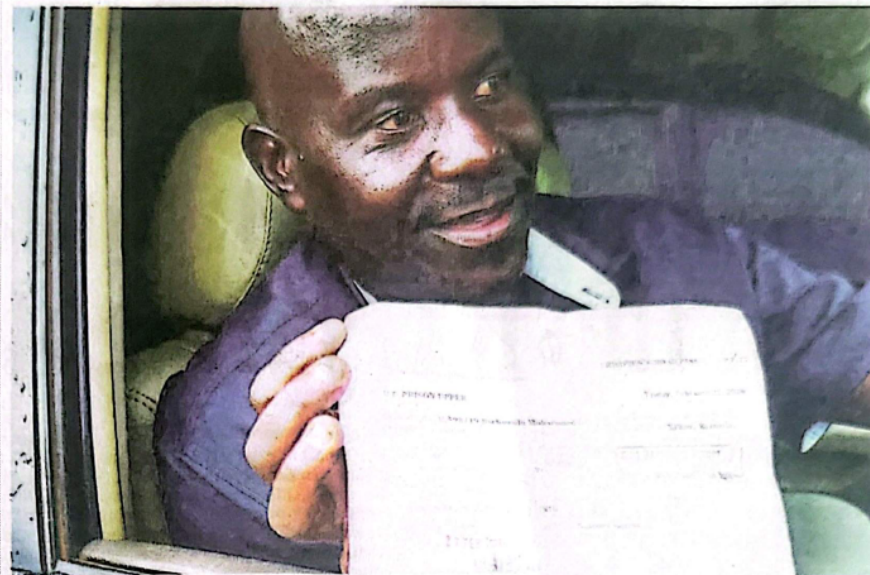
Condemned

In a unanimous decision delivered on September 6, 2023, a panel of five Supreme Court justices, Faith Mwendha, Prof Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza, Percy Night Tuhaise, Mike Chibita, and Stephen Musota, found no reason to alter the sentences previously handed to Ssebuwufu and three others by the Court of Appeal in connection with the aforementioned murder.

In 2019, then Justice Flavia Anglin Ssenoga convicted Ssebuwufu, along with Godfrey Kayiza (alias Godi), Phillip Mirembe, Paul Tasingika, Yoweri Kitayimbwa, Damasseni Ssentongo, Shaban Odutu (alias Golola), and Stephen Lwanga, who received a seven-year sentence for being an accessory to the offence.

The group was found guilty of kidnapping Katusabe from her home in Bwe

Car bond death: Ssebuwufu receives presidential pardon



The proprietor of Pine Car Bond in Kampala, Mr Muhammad Ssebuwufu, displays a signed release form from Luzira Prison on Friday. PHOTO/ABUBAKER LUBOWA

bajja along Entebbe road on October 21, 2015, and transporting her to Pine Car bond along Lumumba Avenue in Kampala, where they subjected her to torture using sharp objects.

Katusabe had reportedly failed to pay a balance of Shs9 million for a vehicle she had purchased from Ssebuwufu's bond valued at Shs17 million.

The convicts also stole Katusabe's sim cards and a mobile phone worth Shs300,000. As a result, Justice Ssenoga sentenced them to serve concurrent punishments ranging from 20 to 40 years for three offences of kidnap with intent to murder, murder, and aggravated robbery.

Sentences reduced

Justice Ssenoga also ordered them to compensate Katusabe's family with Shs100 million for their loss. However, all the convicts, except Stephen Lwanga, appealed against the sentence. In 2021, Court of Appeal justices Fredrick Egonda-Ntende, Catherine Bamugemereire, and Christopher Izama Madama found the sentences to be harsh

and excessive.

They reduced the years of punishment for each convict, with Ssebuwufu receiving an 18-year term, and the others receiving 16 years plus additional months ranging from five to 11 months. Despite this reduction, the convicts were still dissatisfied with the Court of Appeal's decision.

Ssebuwufu argued that the Court of Appeal Justices had erred in upholding his murder conviction without proof of malice aforethought and his participation.

The group also criticised the Court of Appeal for confirming a Shs100 million compensation order without justification and for overlooking mitigating factors such as their time spent on remand.

However, the prosecution urged the court to dismiss the appeal, stating that the convicts were duly charged and convicted for their heinous crimes, with no valid defence. In their decision on Wednesday, the final appellate court justices indicated that, based on the nature of Katusabe's injuries, there

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Appreciation note

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was no doubt that she was maliciously killed by Ssebuwufu and the others. They affirmed that Ssebuwufu was at the crime scene, and Katusabe's arrest was linked to him.

She was also kept at his office, where she was fatally assaulted, and at some point, he participated in her beating. Regarding compensation, the Supreme Court clarified that when an order for compensation is accompanied by the words "to be paid jointly and severally," each individual against whom the order is made is responsible for paying the entire awarded amount. If one party is unable to pay, the others must cover more than their share. In this case, each of the convicts is liable for the entire sum.

"We do not find any reason to interfere with the above sentences passed by the Court of Appeal. Though the Court of Appeal, in considering mitigating factors and aggravated factors, somehow made it in an omnibus way. For A1, he was the owner of the yard, and he was present; he was an older person, and the court found him to be a first offender. But we find that the omission to specify could not cause this court to interfere with the finding, as the court has exercised its duty as it was required under the law. We find that there was no miscarriage of justice," said the justices as they confirmed the respective jail terms.

The Supreme Court's decision was, at the time, the last hope Ssebuwufu had.

The businessman who has been in prison for 11 years insists he's innocent.

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The number of years Pine Car Bond owner Muhammad Ssebuwufu spent in prison over the murder of Betty Donah Katusabe, a client, that occurred in 2015.