

National News

Katanga murder trial: State counters loan distress claim

The Chief State Attorney presented several repayment receipts to dispute the widow's testimony that her husband had been under intense stress over unpaid loans.

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The prosecution yesterday intensified its challenge of the defence evidence in the murder trial of Molly Katanga, the widow and prime suspect in the death of Kampala businessman Henry Katanga, by producing documents it said contradicted her claims on the deceased's financial distress.

During cross-examination before High Court Judge Rosette Comfort Kanla, Chief State Attorney Jonathan Muwaganya presented several repayment receipts to dispute Ms Katanga's testimony that her husband had been under intense stress over unpaid loans, including an alleged Shs1.5 billion debt owed by late businessman Apollo Nyegamehe, popularly known as Aponye.

Last week, Ms Katanga told court that the financial strain from unpaid debts contributed to what she believed was her husband's mental breakdown in the months leading to his death.

However, the prosecution produced about four repayment receipts and bank transfer records to show that even after Aponye's death, his company, Aponye Uganda Limited, continued servicing the loans.

Mr Muwaganya told the court that one of the payments was made on November 1, 2023, the eve of Mr Katanga's death.

The prosecution said the receipts



Molly Katanga in the dock at the High Court in Kampala yesterday. PHOTO/ABUBAKER LUBOWA

presented in court totalled Shs159 million and were intended to demonstrate that the loan obligations were still being honoured by Aponye's family.

The State also challenged Ms Katanga's claim that the late businessman owed Shs1.5 billion, arguing instead that the total loan advanced amounted to Shs1 billion. According to the prosecution, the money was disbursed in instalments of Shs100 million, Shs300 million and Shs600 million.

"From the documents, do you see that Aponye didn't only structure the loan but the company was even paying after the death of Mr Aponye?" Mr Muwaganya asked the accused during cross-examination.

When the prosecution sought to tender the receipts as evidence, the defence team from Kampala Associated Advocates (KAA) initially objected, arguing that the documents had not been disclosed to them beforehand as required under procedure. "We need

to take instructions from our client before we respond because we have never seen these documents before," lawyer Peter Kabatsi submitted.

After a brief consultation, defence lawyer Elison Karuhanga told the court that their client had no objection to the receipts being admitted.

BACKGROUND

Ms Molly Katanga is jointly charged with her two daughters, Patricia Kakwanzi and Martha Nkwazi Katanga, who face lesser charges related to destroying evidence and being accessories after the fact of murder. Other co-accused include Charles Otai, a nursing officer, and George Amanyire, then a shamba boy at the Katangas' residence in Mbuya, Kampala.

"She doesn't object, but the same has no complete picture. So the total payment schedule hasn't been shown," Mr Karuhanga said.

The prosecution also questioned Ms Katanga's earlier claim that her husband may have taken his own life following a mental breakdown.

Mr Muwaganya asked whether she had any medical qualifications to conclude that the deceased had suffered a mental breakdown.

In response, Ms Katanga said she did not have a medical background.

"So your conclusions about your husband's stress or mental breakdown were not based on medical professional opinion but personal observation," the prosecutor put it to her.

Further cross-examination of Molly regarding her defence evidence continues on April 14 as the prosecution tests the defence narrative surrounding the circumstances of Katanga's death.

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