

National News

The assessors say all the ingredients of murder had been sufficiently established.

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Three court assessors last evening advised the High Court to convict Christopher Okello Onyum, the prime suspect in the murder of four toddlers at a Ggaba daycare centre, saying the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt.

Delivering their joint opinion before Justice Alice Komuhangi Khaukha, the assessors concluded that all the ingredients of murder had been sufficiently established.

"Prosecution has proved all the ingredients in the four counts beyond a reasonable doubt. We, therefore, advise this honourable court to convict the accused person on the four counts as charged," the opinion read by Mr John Musana, stated.

The other assessors were Ms Maria Kyobijja and Rachael Ainomugisha.

However, Justice Komuhangi reminded the court that assessors' opinions are not binding.

"As I told you from the very beginning, their opinion does not bind the court. The court reserves the right and the power to make the final verdict," she said, before adjourning the case to Thursday at 10am for judgment. The accused was further remanded.

The announcement drew ululations and applause from members of the public, who have been following proceedings at the makeshift court set up at Ggaba Community Church grounds for the third week running.

Earlier, the prosecution team led by Mr Jonathan Muwaganya and Ms Anna Kiiza urged the court to convict Okello, arguing that the four key elements of murder—death, unlawfulness, malice aforethought, and participation—had all been proved.

Mr Muwaganya told the court that the deaths of Gideon Eteku, Keisha Agena, Othman Otim, Ignatius Sseruyange, and Ryan Odeke were confirmed through post-mortem examinations.

The report indicated that the children died of hypovolemic shock resulting

Ggaba murder: Assessors call for Okello's conviction



Christopher Okello Onyum (centre) is brought to court in Ggaba, Kampala, yesterday. PHOTO/ABUBAKER LUBOWA

from deep neck wounds. The injuries, the court heard, severed critical structures, including the trachea, oesophagus, major blood vessels, and nerves, with some victims also suffering spinal cord damage.

Prosecution evidence

According to the prosecution, two of the children sustained 14-centimetre-deep neck wounds, while the other two had cuts measuring about nine centimetres.

On the issue of unlawfulness, the prosecution argued there was no dispute that the deaths were caused through unlawful means.

Regarding malice aforethought, Mr Muwaganya submitted that intent could be inferred from the nature of the weapon—a kitchen knife—the targeted body part (neck), and the severity of the injuries



Justification.

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"We have also highlighted that in the process of executing the victims, the accused scared a witness who attempted to rescue the children, and after killing them, he threw away the knife, an act of concealing evidence," he said.

On participation, the prosecution cited both direct and circumstantial evidence placing Okello at the scene, including DNA evidence linking him to

the victims and the murder weapon.

"The accused was arrested at the scene. DNA found on the knife handle and on exhibits, including the accused's trousers, directly links him to the crime," Mr Muwaganya submitted.

He added that the accused did not deny causing the deaths but instead claimed he lacked intent due to distress. The prosecution also dismissed the defence's claim of mental illness, arguing that insanity must be proven at the exact time the offence was committed.

"My lord, the defence bears the burden to satisfy the court on the balance of probabilities of the existence of legal insanity and the precise moment of the crime," Mr Muwaganya argued.

He further told the court that Okello, upon arrest, appeared aware of the gravity of his actions and their potential legal consequences—an indication,

PROSECUTION CASE

- Postmortem reports showed all four toddlers died of hypovolemic shock due to deep neck wounds.

- Prosecution argued the killings were clearly unlawful and undisputed.

- Intent inferred from use of a kitchen knife, targeting the neck, and severity of injuries.

- DNA evidence allegedly links the accused to the knife and victims; he was arrested at the scene.

- Conduct after crime: Accused allegedly fled and discarded the weapon, suggesting awareness and concealment.

he said, that was inconsistent with insanity.

Disapproving mental instability

The prosecution also challenged claims that Okello had been living on the streets, instead presenting evidence that he had been assisting vulnerable children, a conduct they argued did not point to mental instability.

Additionally, Mr Muwaganya dismissed the defence's argument that possession of painkillers by Okello upon arrest indicated mental illness, pointing to mobile money transactions made shortly before the incident as proof that the accused was in a sound state of mind.

The case, which has drawn widespread public attention, will be concluded on Thursday in the court ruling, determining whether Okello will be convicted or acquitted of the four counts of murder.

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Lawyers ask court to admit Okello as ruling date set