

DNA links Okello to knife in Ggaba murders

BY ANTHONY WESAKA &
JULIET KIGONGO

KAMPALA. Proceedings in the murder trial of Christopher Okello Onyum were abruptly halted yesterday after a powerful thunderstorm tore through the makeshift court at Ggaba, sending tents flying and triggering panic among court attendees.

The afternoon session, had just resumed for the final prosecution witness. Strong winds ripped apart the main tent, forcing an emergency evacuation.

The suspect, was equally affected as he was in the same tent as the judge, state prosecutors, and defence lawyers. The prison warders swiftly took him away into a nearby holding cell, from where the Luzira prison bus picked him up and took him back to Luzira prison. Court documents for the lawyers and the judge were seen scattered all over the wet ground.

However, earlier in the day, the prosecution led by Jonathan Muwaganya and Anna Kiiza tightened their case against Okello, after forensic evidence linked his DNA to the suspected murder weapon.

Testifying before the High Court, police forensic analyst Bakiabas Harelimana said DNA analysis established that Okello's genetic matter was predominantly found on the handle of a black kitchen knife believed to have been used in the April 2 killings.

He told the court that on April 10, he received a request from Kabalagala Police Station to examine several exhibits recovered from the crime scene. These included the suspected murder weapon, a pair of black trousers allegedly worn by Okello during the alleged attack, sunglasses, blood samples, and school uniforms believed to belong to the victims.

"Analysis revealed that the DNA profile on the knife handle matches that of the suspect," Mr Harelimana testified.

The court further heard that mixed DNA profiles belonging to the victims were also detected on the knee area of the trousers recovered from Okello, as well as on his sunglasses, strengthening the prosecution's assertion that the suspect had direct contact with the children during the attack.

Last week, Detective Assistant Inspector of Police Jim Mutaka, a scene of crime officer attached to Kabalagala Police Station, described the weapon as a black "Mingfen" kitchen knife measuring approximately 1.1 feet in length. He told the court that the knife was recovered outside the daycare fence following a tip-off from a witness.

This is the second incident in recent days to disrupt the high-profile trial. Last week, a van transporting the suspect failed to brake and rammed into a journalist, leaving him with serious injuries.

The trial is expected to resume on Thursday, weather permitting.