Ggaba murder suspect's relatives claim he had mental illness

BY ANDREW BAGALA

KAMPALA. The relatives of a suspect in the killing of four children at Ggaba Early Childhood Development Programme told police that he was suffering from mental illness.

A police source said the relatives of Mr Christopher Okello Onyum, accused of murdering the toddlers, handed over medical reports to prove that he was battling mental illness and undergoing treatment.

"One of the suspect's parents first visited a police station in KMP (Kampala Metropolitan Police) to follow up on the son. He presented medical documents from some of the best hospitals in Africa and the West, where they had taken their son for treatment," a source said.

The officer did not provide this publication with the medical documents.

On Wednesday, Mr Onyum, 38, reportedly visited Ggaba Early Childhood Development Programme, claiming he wanted his child admitted. The administrators explained the admission process. The next day, he returned during break time, paid Shs180,000 in admission fees, and then, out of the blue, pulled out concealed kitchen knives. He began slitting toddlers as young as two years old, but was restrained and arrested by school caretakers, who handed him over to the police. Four children were injured and later succumbed to their wounds.

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AGE OF SUSPECT

The deceased were identified as Gideon Eteku, Keisha Agenrwot, Ignatius Sseruyange, and Ryan Odeke.

A source said Mr Onyum's parent, a renowned accountant consulting for major government and international agencies, admitted that their son never fully recovered and was still undergoing treatment.

This publication contacted Mr Onyum's parent on a known mobile phone for comment, but all calls went unanswered. The suspect's parent had not called back by press time.

Kampala Metropolitan Police Spokesperson Rachael Kawala said police experts took Mr Onyum to his home in Kyanja, Nakawa Division, Kampala City, for a search, where they recovered items relevant to the investigation.

"The detectives searched his home and recovered items key in the investigations. They also recovered the suspect's medical documents at his home," she said yesterday.

Ms Kawala added that she could not divulge further details, as her boss at police headquarters had taken over responsibility for the case.

According to Ugandan law, a person who commits murder while suffering from a "disease of the mind" is not criminally responsible.

Advocate Geoffrey Turyamusiima, who has represented accused persons in similar incidents, explained that the burden of proof lies squarely on the shoulders of the suspect's lawyers and family.

"A suspect isn't criminally responsible of murder if at the time of committing that act was suffering from a disease of mind or he or she didn't understand what he or she was doing. The burden is on the suspect's lawyer and the family to prove that he or she was insane," Mr Turyamusiima said yesterday.



Security personnel cordoned off Ggaba Early Childhood Development Programme after a man reportedly killed of four children. last Thursday. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

He added: "If the medical report shows that he or she was of unsound mind, the suspect can be admitted to Butabika hospital (a psychiatric hospital) for treatment. But if the suspect is found to be of sound mind, he is produced in court on the murder charges. But while in prison, the accused person can continue with medication."

Mr Turyamusiima previously represented Police Constable Ivan Wabwire, who shot dead an Indian money lender on Parliament Avenue in Kampala City on May 23, 2023. PC Wabwire claimed he had a disease of the mind at the time. The court, however, relied on police medical examination reports to dismiss the claim.

PC Wabwire is still undergoing treatment for mental illness in prison.

In Uganda, nearly all suspects accused of murder are subjected to mental examination to establish sanity before their criminal files are submitted to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for sanctioning.

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DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT



The UEDCL Board, Management and Staff are saddened to announce the untimely passing on of its staff **Eng. Stella Asio that occurred on 3 April 2026 following her involvement in a car accident along Mbarara - Masaka highway.**

The burial will be held in Tididiek village in Ngora District today April 7, 2026, starting at 12 PM.

We send our sincere condolences to her friends, family, and the UEDCL fraternity.

We offer prayers for the family of Engineer Stella during this extremely difficult time.

May Engineer Stella Asio's soul rest in eternal peace.

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