

Kunene Sentenced To Life Imprisonment For Murder

Written by Rudi Prinsloo
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IT consultant Muziwendoda (Muzi) Kunene was sentenced to life imprisonment on Friday in the High Court in Bloemfontein for the murder of Ballito estate agent Lynne Hume.

Judge MH Rampai sentenced Kunene, who stood motionless in the dock, to a further 30 years' imprisonment for fraud, robbery and kidnapping.

The court sentenced Kunene's two accomplices Mumukeleni Khoza and Mphakamiseni Khumalo each to in effect 23 years imprisonment.

They were convicted on the charges of murder and kidnapping only.

The court earlier held Kunene, 46, Khoza, 26, and Khumalo, 21, had kidnapped and murdered Hume on October 23, 2007.

It found Hume, 47, was driven from Ballito in KwaZulu-Natal to a dirt road near Kestell in the eastern Free State and shot in the passenger seat of her white Volvo vehicle.

The car was then set alight and her body burned beyond recognition.

However, shortly after being sentenced Kunene made a statement in front of journalists and a full court maintaining his innocence.

"I must declare undeterred, very strongly, I did not commit those crimes that I have been sentenced of here."

Kunene told those present in court, including some of Hume's family members, he would use all avenues until he had proved his innocence.

"Whatever it takes, I don't really mind how long it takes but eventually I will be able to do it," he said adding he felt for the family's loss.

Kunene's lawyer, Jan Nkhahle, earlier indicated to Judge Rampai that he had received instructions to seek leave to appeal the conviction and the sentence at the appropriate time.

Before handing out the sentence, Judge Rampai said he had never felt so "uneasy of sentencing a person" as he was with Kunene.

Referring to Kunene's background in KwaZulu-Natal and the "outstanding school mates" he attended school with, Rampai said Kunene was seen by his peers as one of the country's most gifted computer wizards.

"I am tempted to say that you could have become one of the (Mark) Shuttleworths of this world. For some strange reason you choose the criminal path."

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Rampai found no mitigating factors in sentencing Kunene.

"Despite my uneasiness I can find no other sentences than the minimum sentence (for murder)."

Rampai also said the trial was one of the most well-investigated cases he had ever presided over.

He said police often get criticised for "shoddy" work and were seldom given praise for doing well.

He congratulated the investigating team under Inspector Gert van der Merwe, the prosecution and others.

"You have delivered excellent service to the public."

The proceedings were attended by Hume's husband, Mark, and her daughters, Samantha and Kristy-Lynne. The three hugged each other after sentence was delivered.

Hume said afterwards the sentences seemed reasonably fair although he would have liked the two co-accused to get life imprisonment.

"I do not believe that they were intellectually impaired compared with accused one (Kunene)... they fully know what they have done, every man knows what is right and what is wrong."

Hume said there was no doubt that his wife's murder was premeditated.

He said he was happy with the sentences "if a life sentence was the maximum the current society can give" otherwise he would have liked the death penalty.

Other family members indicated they were glad the matter was finally over.

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