

NEWS

Double life sentence for teacher who killed teen with albinism for muti

By **NONKULULEKO NJILO** - 24 August 2019



Gabisile Shabane and her 15-month-old cousin were taken from their home in Witbank..

Image: SAPS

A man with a degree in teaching who admitted to abducting and killing a teen living with albinism, believing the deed would boost his business, was handed two life sentences by a Mpumalanga court on Friday.

Themba Thubane appeared in the Middelburg High Court after pleading guilty to seven charges.

Thubane and accomplices broke into the Shabane household in Hlalanikahle, Mpumalanga, in 2018.

The group kidnapped Gabisile Shabane, 13, and her 15-month-old cousin Nkosikhona Ngwenya. Both children were then killed and Gabisile's body was later found with body parts missing. Her killing was multi-related.

Judge Segopotje Mphahlele said, in handing down judgment, that the crimes were clearly planned.

"The accused and ... the others took a decision to travel to Witbank to the house where they could find a person living with albinism. [An accomplice] provided them with the layout of the house. They further knew that the people who were living in that house were the most vulnerable. It was an old lady, her daughter and some children," she said.

Mphahlele revealed that an axe was used to break the windows to gain entry into the house. The judge said Thubane, in his plea, claimed he had forgotten some details of the robbery, but recalled some.

"He admitted that when they finally found the children, he ... knew his dream of having a flourishing business was about to be realised," she said.

Mphahlele said the children had suffered a gruesome death at the hands of unscrupulous men who were blinded by greed and the love of money.

"The people living with albinism face discrimination and stigma. They face a more severe form of violence."

"The attacks have several root causes, including ignorance, longstanding stigma and the most disgusting is the harmful practices emanating from manifestations in some beliefs in witchcraft," ruled Mphahlele.

On counts of house breaking and kidnapping, Thubane was sentenced to five years' imprisonment on each. On the double murder charges, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for each and three years for possession of a firearm.

Mphahlele said the behaviour of the accused showed a lack of remorse.

"The behaviour of the accused at all material times is indicative of the lack of repentance. Genuine remorse must be distinguished from self pity..." added Mphahlele.

Clapping and joyful cheers could be heard moments after the judgment was handed down.

Three co-accused have pleaded not guilty and are expected to return to court on May 25, 2020.

RECOMMENDED

by **NEWSROOM AI**