



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KENYA

AT KITALE

CRIMINAL PETITION NO. 3 OF 2019

CHARLES CHEMASWETI.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

REPUBLIC.....RESPONDENT

RULING

- 1. The Petitioner herein was** convicted and sentenced to death for the offence of robbery with violence contrary to Section 296(2) of the Penal Code in Kitale Senior Principal Court in *Criminal case No. 306 of 2001*. Both his first and second appeal were dismissed.
- 2. The Petitioner has filed this Petition pursuant to** the Supreme Court decision in *Francis Karioko Muruateru & Another v Republic* SCK Pet. No. 15 OF 2015 [2017] eKLR declaring the mandatory death sentence for the offence of murder unconstitutional. In the case of *William Okungu Kittiny v Republic* KSM CA Criminal Appeal No. 56 of 2013 [2018] eKLR, the Court of Appeal applied the *Muruatetu* decision *mutatis mutandis* to the provisions of section 296(2) of the *Penal Code (Chapter 63 of the Laws of Kenya)* which imposes the mandatory death penalty for the offence of robbery with violence.
3. He attached certificates to his petition in a bid to demonstrate that he has reformed and has underwent various rehabilitative programmes and has attained a diploma in bible correspondence and tailoring Grade III Trade Test.
4. Mr Omooria, learned counsel for the state filed written submissions on 14th January, 2020 opposing the petition and urged the court to consider that the offence was very serious in that the petitioner terrorized the complainant by firstly setting his house ablaze, wounded him before robbing him off.
5. The Supreme Court decision in the *Muruatetu case* (*supra*) declared the mandatory death sentence unconstitutional and therefore I am called upon to re-sentence the Petitioner.
6. I have considered the *Sentencing Policy Guidelines, 2016* which provided for a four tier methodology for determination of a custodial sentence. The first point is establishing the custodial sentence under the applicable statute. Second, consider the mitigating circumstances or circumstances that would lessen the term of the custodial sentence. Third, aggravating circumstances that will go to increase the sentence. Fourth, weigh both aggravating and mitigating circumstances.
7. Considering the fact that the aforementioned guidelines did not take into account the fact that the death penalty would be declared unconstitutional, the Court in the *Muruatetu Case (Supra, para. 71)*,

considered that in re-sentencing in a case of murder, the following mitigating factors would be applicable;

- (a) age of the offender;*
- (b) being a first offender;*
- (c) whether the offender pleaded guilty;*
- (d) character and record of the offender;*
- (e) commission of the offence in response to gender-based violence;*
- (f) remorsefulness of the offender;*
- (g) the possibility of reform and social re-adaptation of the offender;*
- (h) any other factor that the Court considers relevant.*

8. A look at other sentences that were imposed by courts after the Muruatetu case in cases of this nature implies that courts have considered a minimum of 20 years as sentence for offences of this nature. This Court in **Benjamin Kemboi Kipkone Vs Republic (2018) eKLR**, substituted the death sentence with 20 years' imprisonment with effect from the date of judgment where 3 robbers armed with an Ak 47 rifle robbed the complainants of Kshs. 250,000/= and a mobile phone.

9. In **Paul Ouma Otieno Vs Republic (2018) eKLR** where the convict was armed with an AK 47 rifle and a kitchen knife and robbed the complainant of cash Kshs. 450,000/= and 3 mobile phones, **Majanja J** substituted the death sentence with 20 years imprisonment commencing on the date of the sentence by the trial court.

10. In **Wycliffe Wangugi Mafura –Vs- Republic Eldoret Criminal Appeal No. 22 of 2016 (2018)** the Court of Appeal imposed a sentence of 20 years imprisonment where the Appellant was involved in robbing an Mpesa shop agent with the use of firearm.

11. In **Benson Ochieng & France Kibe –Vs- Republic (2018) eKLR**, Joel Ngugi J. re-sentenced the petitioners to 20 years imprisonment upon considering that the offence was aggravated by the use of multiple guns by an organized gang to commit armed robbery.

12. I have considered the above stated principles of sentencing and that the Petitioner has been in custody for a period of almost 19 years. I have also considered the circumstances in which the offence was committed and the fact that the Petitioner has pleaded for leniency.

13. Upon considering precedents of other judges in re-sentencing cases involving robbery with violence as indicated above. I am satisfied that the period already served is enough punishment for the Petitioner.

14. In the end, the court makes the following orders;

- a) The sentence is hereby reviewed to the period already served in custody.*
- b) The petitioner be and is hereby set at liberty unless otherwise lawfully held.*

Signed, Dated and Delivered at Kitale on this 4th day of March, 2020.

H.K. CHEMITEI

JUDGE

4/3/2020

In the presence of:-

Ms Kagali for the Respondent

Applicant present

Court Assistant – Kirong

Ruling read in open court