

# Media Statement



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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**DATE: 22 FEBRUARY 2021**

**RE: BYLSMA'S LEAVE TO APPEAL SENTENCE AND CONVICTION REFUSED**

The Deputy Judge President of the High Court of South Africa: North West Division, refused Xander Blysma leave to appeal against his conviction and sentence.

Judge Hendricks highlighted that having considered all grounds of appeal and having listened to both counsel's submissions and studying heads of argument, as well as carefully perusing the record and main judgement, he is of the view that no other court, would come to a different decision than what the high court had arrived at regarding the conviction.

Xander Bylsma was sentenced to two terms of life imprisonment for murdering his ex-girlfriend and her friend in 2018.

Following his conviction, Bylsma's defence attorneys made an application for leave to appeal. They cited their belief in the higher court passing a different judgement on the matter. The defence team therefore requested judge Hendricks to grant them leave to appeal and the case be moved to the Supreme Court of Appeals.

Meanwhile, the state stood firm in opposing the application, pleading with the judge to dismiss it as the reasons stated by the defence team bared no substance in changing the circumstances surrounding the case.

Judge Ronald Hendricks sentenced Bylsma to life imprisonment on two counts of murder for strangulating and hanging Sharnell Hough (17) and strangling her friend, Marna Engelbrecht (16) who is said to be his relative. The bodies of the deceased were discovered at the Stella school hostel, Huis Eesterhuizen, where they both attended.

Evidence presented in court by the state indicated that the murder was pre-meditated and driven by malice. A friend to both Bylsma and Hough testified on how the accused called her on the 24th May 2018, citing his disapproval of Hough having moved on with her new boyfriend. When asked what he intends to do, he vowed to confront Hough in two days and turn her life into hell to a point that she commits suicide.

On 26 May 2018, the lifeless body of Sharnell Hough was discovered hanging on the hostel stairs with a rope around her neck and Marna Engelbrecht's body was found in the hostel's bathroom with signs of strangulation.

On the day the two bodies were discovered, the accused, in the company of a private investigator was handed over to the Vryburg police station to be charged for two counts of murder. More evidence pointing to the accused was gathered through telephone records and text messages.

Blyisma is expected to effectively start his jail term as per the sentence meted out against him.

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