IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COUT OF NIGERIA IN THE AWKA JUDICIAL DIVISION HOLDEN AT AWKA ON THURSDAY THE 26TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2019 BEFORE THE HON. JUSTICE I.B. GAFAI JUDGE

CHARGE NO:FHC/AWK/75C/2017

BETWEEN:

INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE ::: COMPLAINANT

AND

UCHECHUKWU MADUAKOR ::: ACCUSED

Accused in Court.

Peter (Court Clark) affirms to interpret English to Ibo
O.T. Anyanwu (Mrs.) for the Prosecution.

AWKA

CERTIFIED TRUE OUPY

JUDGEMENT

By an undated charge filed on the 31st of August 2017, the Accused herein namely **Uchechukwu Maduakor** was arraigned in this Court on the 26th of September 2017 as follows:

"That you **Uchechukwu Maduakor** 'm' of Ogwu Amanasa Village Umuchu Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State between 14th day of August 2017 and 15th day of August, 2017 at Ogwu Amanasa village Umuchu, within the jurisdiction of the Federal High Court Awka did unlawfully damages EEDC cable wire used for

converting electricity by illegally cutting off the said Electrical High Tension Cables, property of the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company and you thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 9 of the Miscellaneous offences Act Cap M17 Vol. 9 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004."

The charge was read to the Accused in English, translated and explained to him in Ibo language which he understood to the satisfaction of the Court. He pleaded not guilty to the charge.

At the hearing, the Prosecution called five witnesses to prove the charge against the Accused. A synopsis of their evidence is reproduced as follows:

PW1 is **Chief Sylvester Ezeokenwa** who introduced himself as a member of the Igwe in Council, in charge of Etitiala Umuchu. His evidence in chief run thus:

"Yes, I know the Accused. He is from my community. He is from $\mbox{Oqu Village}.$

In August 2017, the Chairman of the youth in the village called me and told me that there was vandalisation of EEDC cables. I ran home. I called him. They showed me the area of the theft. I reported to the Police. At the scene, I saw that 6 poles and cable were removed. We reported at Umuchu Police Station. The youth told us that they saw the Accused carrying those cables. We went back to the scene together with the police, where the police confirmed the theft. We discovered heaps of the

EEDC cable behind the house of the Accused. We carried the cables to the police station. We began to search for the Accused. He was arrested the following day. On interrogation he admitted that he stole those cables. We called the attention of the EEDC in the area. Upon further interrogation, the Accused revealed that other cables stolen by him had already been taken to Akokwa in Imo State. The police carried him up to that place in Imo State. His mother is married there. The whole rest of the cables were recovered there and were brought back to the police station at Umuchu.

Yes, I made statement. I can identify my statement by mere sight of it as it is in my hand writing.

(PW1 shown a statement by the Prosecution) Yes, this is the statement I made.

Prosecution: I tender it.

Accused: Not objecting.

Court: Admitted as Exhibit "1".



(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
22/02/18

Prosecution:

That's all."

Upon cross examination, PW1 stated thus:

"Yes, the youth who reported to me said that they saw him carrying the cables early in the morning. Yes, it was very early in the morning. It was later we discovered where he kept them; behind his house. They saw him clearly. Yes, those youth made statements to the police. All the evidence I gave here today is correct. It was the Accused himself who took us to his mother's place at Imo State where we recovered other cables.

We had asked him severally if there were others with whom he committed the offence but he refused to name any. That's all."

PW2 is Ihemuegbulam Ezekwike of Umunino village Enugwu-Likwu. His evidence in chief ensued thus:

"I know the Accused. On 15/8/17 around 6:00am, I saw the Accused carrying naked electric wires.

I called our youth chairman name Obinna. I narrated to him that I saw the Accused with electric wires suspected to be stolen. The Accused was arrested at Akokwa town in Imo State. It was there also that those items were found.

Yes, I made statement to the Police. **Prosecution**: I tender it.

Chief Ndukaihe: I have no objection.

Court: Admitted as Exhibit "2".



(Signed) I. B. GAFAI JUDGE 18/04/18

Upon cross examination, PW2 stated thus:

"The site where I do my load loader work is at Oko village in Aguata LGA. I was not at home on the 15th of August 2017. I was going to work. I did not accompany the police to Akokwa in Imo State. No, it was not raining on that date. I saw the Accused alone.

Yes, in my statement (Exhibit "2") I mentioned that when I saw the Accused; it is true that I was hiding, Yes, there is only one express way on the way from Umuchu to Ako. It was one (1) bundle of electric cable that I saw the Accused carrying. Yes, it was in its original form. That's all."

PW3 is Julius Odoh the Feeder Manager of EEDC Ekwulobia district. He testified in chief thus:

"On 18/8/17, I was informed by the Chief Security Officer of our division by name Isiagu Hebolite Chiedu that the Police have arrested somebody cutting EEDC cable. I went to the police station. I saw the Accused with a heap of cables belonging to EEDC. The cables actually belong to EEDC.



We moved to the site where it happened at Amanasa Umuchu which is within my area of coverage. There I saw that the cables were removed. About 5 spars of cables were removed. The police later recovered more of those cables with the Accused. What I mean is that the Accused that the Accused That's all.

That's all.

His cross examination ensued thus:

"Yes, I didn't see when the Accused vandalised the EEDC cables. It is not the chief security officer who told me all that I have said here today.

No, it is not from Amanasa people that I heard the information about the vandalization.

Yes, EEDC is a private company. No, I do not know when the people at Amanasa were getting uninterrupted electricity supply prior to 18/8/17. The people that were not getting the electricity was as a result of the offence. It is also because of the upgrade of the facilities that is currently going on that the power supply to that part is not regular. We started the upgrade in early 2017.

I saw heaps of EEDC cables at the police station. It is 5 spars. It is not easy to ascertain how many spars were recovered on the following day because they were all cut. The total spar was 1, 250 meters; amounting to 5 spars.

Yes, I made statement at the police station. It is with the police.

Chief Ndukihe: I apply that the prosecution gives me the original of its statement.

Prosecution: Here it is, take it.

Chief Ndukihe: I am grateful.

PW continues: I made the Statement on 18/8/17.

(PW shown the statement) Yes, this is my statement.

Chief Ndukihe: I tender it.

Prosecution: I object. Proper foundation was not made.

See section 323 Evidence Act.

Chief Ndukihe: Proper foundation was made. The statement is original. Section 232 is not applicable at this stage.

Court: Without any ado, the objection is overruled hecause there is no better foundation than





that by the PW himself identifying the statement as his very own statement. Secondly but more importantly, the statement is relevant to the evidence of the PW. It is admitted in evidence as Exhibit "3".

(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
26/06/18

PW continues: (PW asked by the Defence Counsel to look at Exhibit 3). The statement (Exhibit 3) was made on August, 30th, 2017; but the date I mentioned earlier was a mistake. That's all."

PW4 IS Sgt. Olarinwaju Owolabi whose evidence in chief ensued thus:

"I know the Accused. I was the I.P.O..

On 18/8/17, one Philip Obinna Eseanyi, youth chairman Emanasa with other youth came to the charge room and reported a case of vandalization of EEDC cable wire. We obtained their statements.

We arrested the Accused. He made statement in English. He confessed to the crime. Scene of crime visited. Items recovered at the scene. 1 develop Slippers EEDC cable wires, 1 cron cutter, I bamboo stick, 1 pliar were recovered from the Accused.

He personally led us to the scene where all these items were recovered. According to him, the bamboo stick was used by him to climb the EEDC pole, the other instruments were used by him to cut the cables. Search was conducted. He led us to Imo State where the EEDC



cable were recovered. The case was later transferred to the police state headquarters.

Yes, I can identify his statement. I can identify it by my handwriting. (PW shown statement) Yes, it is the one.

Prosecution: I tender it

I object. It was obtained by torture. Chief Ndukihe: The witness with me Mr. Torture from

SARS hanged the Accused upside down.

we are ready for trial within trial. Prosecution:

Proceed." Court:

In the course of the trial within trial, after the Prosecution had closed its case in the trial within trial and the Accused was presenting his case in the trial within trial, his learned counsel informed the Court that he was withdrawing his objection to the admissibility of the Statement in issue. Consequently, the Statement was admitted in evidence at that stage as exhibit "4". PW4 then continued with his evidence in chief; which ensued thus:

"Yes, I executed 2 search warrants. I can identify both by my handwriting. (PW4 shown 2 documents by prosecution) Yes, these are the search warrants.

Prosecution: I tender both. Not objecting. Chief Ndukihe:



Court: Admitted as Exhibits "5" and "5A" respectively.

(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
27/06/18

PW 4 continues:

Prosecution: I ask for stand down to bring the wires

from the C. I. D.

Court: Stood down for 2 hours.

(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
27/06/18

Case recalled at 3:10pm Same Appearances

PW 4 reminded of his Oath, continues his

testimony:

Yes, I recovered roles of cable wires. I can

identify them, it is registered.

Prosecution: My Lord, the cables are outside the Court.

I apply for a locus inquo.

Court:

Later today then.



(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
27/06/18

At the Locus Inquo

Accused present.
Same Appearances.

PW shows the Court the bundle of cable wires he mentioned earlier while in Court.

(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
27/06/18

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Court resumes in Court.

Accused in Court.

Same Appearances.

Prosecution: I apply to tender the bundle of the cable

wires identified by PW while at the locus.

Mr. Ojimba: Not opposing. It was not recovered from

the Accused.

Court:

Admitted as Exhibit "6". Exhibit "6" be kept

by the Prosecution.

(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
27/06/18

PW 4 continues: Yes, I recovered a pliar. I can identify

it. It is marked. (PW4 shown a pliar) Yes, it

is the one.

Prosecution: I tender it.

Mr. Ojimba: Not objecting.

Court: Admitted as Exhibit "7".

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DATE OF THE COURT

(Signed)
I. B. GAFAI
JUDGE
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PW4: That's all."

Upon cross-examination, PW4 stated thus:

"Yes, I know PW1.

Yes, he made statement. Yes the Exhibits we inspected at the locus inquo were recovered in the house of Uche Maduakor.

Yes, Uche Maduakor still lives with his parents and also lives in Umuchu. We recovered the items in the house of his mother at Akokwa in Imo State. It is a flat. We went there in the night. I cannot describe but can identify the house.

Yes, the case was investigated by the State C.I.D. That's all."

PW5 is Sgt Jude Nwookpuru. His evidence in chief ensued thus:

"Yes, I know the Accused. On 21/8/17 I was at the Investigation department State C.I.D. when this case was referred to me for investigation. I recorded statement from the Accused voluntarily. I cautioned him. He signed and I signed.

Later, I visited the scene of the crime. I registered the exhibits recovered. I wrote a Report.

I can identify the Statement I recorded for the Accused by my handwriting and signature. (PW shown a statement by the prosecution) Yes, this is the statement I recorded for the Accused.

Chief Ndukihe:



Not objecting. I am not objecting to the admission of the statement but I wish to place of it on record that the Accused never made this statement and will address the issue at the appropriate stage. Court: The statement is admitted as Exhibit "8".

(Signed) I. B. GAFAI JUDGE 02/04/19

PW5: That's the end of my evidence in chief." Upon cross examination, he stated thus:

"About 5 of us investigated this case but I was the I.P.O. I was not the team leader.

Yes, it was investigated by the I.P.O. at Umuchu Police Division before it was transferred to the S.C.I.D.

Yes, I saw a Statement made by the Accused while at the Umuchu Police Station. It was transferred to me on 21/8/2017. The Accused made Statement on the same date. (PW shown exhibit 8) Exhibit 8 was made on 22/8/17.

The cable wire was recovered partly in Umuchu and partly at Imo State in a village called Ogu. It was in uncompleted building. That's all."

In his defence, the Accused testified and called no other. In his evidence in chief, he testified as follows:

"On 16/8/17, I was working at Akpu village around 4:00pm. Someone called me on phone, that he is a policeman and invited me to the police station. I went there the following day. The man came. He took me to the counter, then to his office. He asked me if I knew Pius Ezekwike. I told him that he is my neighbour. He said that Pius and vigilante group reported that they saw me cutting electric wires. I denied it.

PEDERAL HIBE COURT

Later, the said Plus came together with 3 others. Plus insisted that it was me he saw, cutting the wirres. Police went with their vehicle and returned with the wires they alleged I cut. I maintained that I did not cut the wires. The police took me back into their office. The police asked me to make Statement. I refused. They handcuffed me, placed me on top of the wires and they photographed me. They took me to an abandoned house and said it was where I cut the wires. They took my pictures there to. They brought me out into the market square on the market day while I was handcuffed. They snapped my pictures there too. They returned me to the police station.

Pius and others made statements. The security men too did. Then later, Mr. Ola the police officer called me into his office. He asked me to tell him the truth and he will let me go. I didn't admit it. I was beaten by one of the police men, teargassed and handcuffed. Because of the pain of the handcuff, I said I would make statement. They placed me flat on a table and brought out a matchet. The spot of the injury is right here on my back (DW shows spot). The DPO came out. He stopped them from torturing me. They took me back to the cell.

On the following day the 18th of August 2017, they took me to my father's house, searched my room, found nothing. They took my motorcycle as exhibit.

I never made any statement. They wrote their thing and told me to thumbprint. I did because they said they were transferring me to the State C.I.D.

There was N85,000 in my bag together with my phone and my First Bank ATM card and driver's license. They returned me to State C.I.D. on 21/8/17. The C.O.P. asked me if I was the one cutting the wires, I denied. He asked them to detain me. One Jude was the I.P.O. he asked me to make statement. He locked me in cell.

On 08/8/17, they asked me to call my parents. Then later on 18/8/17, they granted me bail. I am innocent of the charge. That's all."

Upon cross examination, he stated thus:

"Yes, I am from Umuchu village. No, I don't know one Chiqbo Ezenwaka. No, he is not my mother's brother. The person who called is Mr. Ola. It is not true that it was Mr. Ezenwaka that called me on phone.

I went to the Police Station by myself. It is God that treated and healed me from the deep cut on my back. The scars on my face are from accident in 2002.

I did not make Statement at Umuchu Police Station, Yes, I made statement at State C.I.D. I only thumb printed at the State C.I.D.

No, I don't use iron cutlers in my job as iron bender. I don't know what is iron cutter even as I am Iron bender. I did not use pliars in my work as iron bender.

I stopped education at primary school, class 5. That's all."

At the close of the hearing, the Court ordered counsel to file and exchange written addresses. The case was adjourned to the 25th of June 2019 for adoption of final written addresses. When the case came up on that date, neither of the two learned counsel had filed anything. The Court adjourned the case to the 3rd of July 2019 for Judgement. Two days after the case was adjourned for Judgement, i.e. on the 27th of June 2019, a motion exparte dated the same date was filed for the Accused by which his learned counsel sought for an order vacating the earlier Order made on the 25th of June by which

the case was adjourned for Judgement and for leave to file and serve his written address out of the time ordered and to deem same also as properly filed and served. The motion was heard on the same date i.e 27/6/19 and was granted as sought. Inevitably therefore, the earlier date fixed for the Judgement could no longer stand as the Court had to allow time for the Prosecution also to file its written address. The annual long vacation of the Court commenced the following week.

In his written address, the learned counsel for the Accused Chief C.L. Ndukaihe formulated a lone issue for the determination of this Court thus:

"Whether from the facts placed before the Court has the Prosecution proved its case against the Defendant beyond reasonable doubt."

The fulcrum of his entire written submissions is in its following portion:

"My lord, the Prosecution has failed to prove his case against the Accused person. The evidence of the prosecution witnesses were all contradicted as a result of cross-evamination.

The DW1 in defence of the case against him led evidence as to how he was wrongly arrested, he also gave uncontradicted evidence. The evidence of DW1 was not in any way contradicted.

The alleged exhibit was not in any was found with the Defendant or his house. It was found in an uncompleted building, which does not belong to the Defendant.

Secondly, my lord nor of Prosecution witnesses stated that he saw the Defendant cutting down wire from the pole. All the evidence given by the Prosecution witnesses are all hearsay. The honourable Court cannot rely on such evidence.

My lord it will be correct to say that from the totality of evidence before the court, all the ingredients of the offence the Defendant was charged with has not been established. See Aitama V. State (supra). Also in the case of Oblode & or Sr. V. State (1970) All N.L.R the diction of the house of lords was again re-echoed in Woolmington V.D.P.P. where Lord Sanklev held that

"If at the end of the whole case, there is reasonable doubt created by the evidence by either the Prosecution and the Accused person, the Prosecution has not made out a case, the Accused person or persons is entitled to acquittal."

The foregoing represents the respective cases of the parties in this case.

I have carefully examined and considered the charge; viza-viz the evidences adduced by both sides on it. The gist of the charge is that the Accused is alleged to have unlawfully damaged, cut off electric cable wires belonging to the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company, used for converting electricity and thus committed an offence punishable under section 9 of

the Miscellaneous Offences Act.

FEDERAL HIGH COURT
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For the sake of clarity, let me quickly explain that the Miscellaneous Offences Act has no section 9 as erroneously referred to in the charge by the Prosecution. In its entirety, the Act has only 5 sections. It is in its section 1 subsection 9 that the Act provides that:

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"(9) Any person who unlawfully disconnects, removes, damages, tampers, meddles with or in any was whatsoever interferes with any plant, works, cables, wire or assembly of wires designed or used for transferring or converting electricity shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to be sentenced to imprisonment for life."

The charge is therefore hinged on the provisions of section 1(9) of the Act (supra) and not on the erroneous, non-existent "section 9" referred in the charge. Sadly, there has not till date been any comment on this by both learned counsel, more particularly that for the Accused.

After a very careful consideration of the entire facts and evidences adduced by the Prosecution at the trial, I have formed the considered view that the provisions of section 1(9) (supra) do not tally with the thrust of the evidence by the Prosecution as much as the provisions of section 1 (10) does; hecause the latter provides that:

"(10) Any person who unlawfully disconnects, removes, damages, tampers, meddles with or in

any way whatsoever interferes with any electric fittings, meters or other appliances used for generating, transforming, conveyancing, supplying or selling electricity shall be guilty of an offence and, liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 21 years."

In my view, the provisions of section 1(10) are a lot more in tandem with the thrust of the Prosecution's case as a whole and in which context also the Accused seems to have based his What is more, when carefully considered, the defence. provisions of section 1(9) (supra) seem to target much more heineous offences often perpetrated by terrorists and allied offenders who aim at maximum damage at government's sensitive public facilities such as power, rail etc with the ultimate aim of causing disaffection and unrest. That is why those provisions contemplate such high magnitude facilities such as plants, works etc. In effect, it is not the case of the Prosecution that the Accused set out to or did in fact damage plaints, or works in the sense derivable under section 1(9). Instead, its case is of a simple common offence of the usual stealing of electrical fittings.

Section 229 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015 provides that:

"Where a Defendant is charged with an offence relating to property and the evidence establishes the commission by him with respect to the same property of another offence, he may be convicted of that other offence although he was not charged with it."

This short analysis should not be misconstrued to suggest that the Accused in this case has infact committed the offence or that the Court has reached a finding to that effect. It is only to demonstrate the discretion of the Court to proceed to determine the case under a different offence from that on the charge.

Proceeding therefore under the provisions of section 1(10) (supra), the pertinent questions to ask are:

- Did the Accused unlawfully disconnect or remove or damage or interfere with exhibit "6"?
- ii. Is exhibit "6" used for converting electricity?

While the evidence of the Prosecution witnesses seem to suggest affirmative answers to both questions, the defence of the Accused seem to suggest a complete disconnect between him and exhibit "6" and indeed with all the key aspects of the evidence of the Prosecution. A very careful examination of the evidence of each of the five Prosecution witnesses; more particularly PW1 whose key evidence is that he saw the Accused carrying electric



wires comprised in exhibit "6", the consistency that run through their entire testimonies and the consistency of those evidences with exhibits "6" and "8" weigh in my mind a lot heavier than the blanket denial of same by the Accused at the trial. Recall also that exhibit "8" which is the confessional Statement of the Accused, admitted in evidence with the express consent of his learned counsel is in all fours with the evidences adduced. In it, the Accused narrated vividly about his connection with exhibit "6" thus:

"....On Monday being 14th day of August, 2017, at about 10:00pm while rain was falling I went to Ogu with plier and cut EEDC cable wires that were connected with the poles. Constructed to supply power to Ogu/Umuchu. I climbed the poles with Indian Bambo, I cut from one of the farms around the area. After cutting the cable wire, I rolled it and parked same into an uncompleted building near the site where I cut the cable wires. The cable wires I cut from the pole is four line and I cut about four poles. Before I could finish rolling the cable I cut, it was morning time which is about 6:00am when people will start going to their farm and I stopped. On the following day being Tuesday the 15th day of August 2017 at about 10:00pm, I went back to the uncompleted building where I parked the cables and started folding the wires role by role. I thereafter tied about four roles and moved it to Akuokwa where I parked the four role inside the bush before coming back to park another four roles to the same bush. I



was able to carry eight (8) roles to the bush at Akuokwa before the day breaks. On Wednesday 16th August 2017 at about morning hours, my uncle Chigbo Ezenwaka the brother of my mother called me on phone asking me to tell him the truth if my hands are in the cutting of the cable at Ogu-Umuchu and I denied that I don't know anything about it. My uncle Chigbo Ezenwaka told me that I should come to Umuchu since I denied that I don't know anything about the cables. On that same day, I drove to my Uncle's house at Umuchu and he (Chigbo) took me to Umuchu police station. It was at the station that the police from Umuchu arrested me and I made my statement to the police confessing to them that I cut the cables. I took the police from Umuchu station to the uncompleted building where I parked remaining cables and the police recovered the I also led the police from Umuchu to cables. Umuezeaga village Akuokwa Imo State where I parked the cables inside the bush and the police recovered it. The total roles the police recovered from me were sixteen (16) in numbers including the once I have not folded. I don't have any person to supply the cables to yet but I intended to look for the buyers immediately I finished rolling/folding the cables."

In my view, the denial by the Accused of the allegations in the charge are clearly an afterthought. There is no hesitation in my mind in arriving at the finding that the Accused did unlawfully disconnect and damage exhibit "6" and that exhibit "6" is undoubtedly used for converting electricity; both findings



being in line with the provisions of section 1(10) of the Act (supra).

If I may, I should further explain here that the learned counsel for the Accused did not seem to remember that the charge is one under the provisions of the Miscellaneous Offences Act because in his entire written address, there is no analysis whatsoever or even a mere mention of the provisions of the Act nor indeed even a specific reference to key portions of the charge. It is not enough to submit that the Prosecution has the burden of proving the charge beyond reasonable doubt. From all that I have examined and considered, it is very easy to hold and I so do that the Prosecution has proved the ingredients of the offence under section 1(10) of the Act beyond reasonable doubt in the manner provided under the provisions of sections 131 and 135 of the Evidence Act 2011 which placed the burden of proof of the charge beyond reasonable doubt on the Prosecution.

In the end, I am satisfied that the Accused did commit the offence under section 1(10) of the Act and is hereby accordingly convicted.



(Signed)
I.B. GAFAI
JUDGE
26/9/19

court: Any record of previous conviction?

prosecution: None.

Court: Any allocutus?

Mr. Ojimba: He is a first time offender. I ask for mercy. He is

remorseful.

Court: Sentence will be delivered later today.

SENTENCE

I have listened to and considered the plea for mercy as advocated for the Convict by his learned counsel. I have accorded due thoughts to the two grounds advanced in the allorutus.

I have similarly considered the offence for which the convict was convicted. In particular, I have considered the prevalence, magnitude and the effect of the offence. I have also further considered the provisions of the Act under which he was convicted. I am satisfied that the provisions therein contained do not tie the hands of this Court in awarding a lesser sentence than the maximum punishment provided thereunder in deserving cases. I am convinced that this case is deserving of such exercise and I will do so in the hope that the convict may thereby turn a new leaf.

Consequently, I sentence you **UCHECHUKWU**MADUAKOR to a term of five (5) years imprisonment with effect from the date of arraignment in this case i.e., 26th of September 2017. Exhibit "6" be returned to the Complainant (EEDC).

(Signed)
I.B. GAFAI
JUDGE
26/9/19

