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Man Charged With Murder of 39-year-old Laura Blyden Ordered to Seek Mental Evaluation; Bail Set at \$500,000

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Nisha Charles **November 08, 2022**

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A portion of the Oswald Harris Court Housing Community.

ST. THOMAS — A psychological evaluation has been ordered for the man charged with [the murder of 39-year-old Laura Blyden](#) on November 5.

[Ahjahra Francis](#), age 37, was arrested and charged with first-degree murder, first-degree assault, third-degree assault, and use of a dangerous weapon during the commission of a crime of violence.

His arrest follows a report placed with the 911 Emergency Call Center around 1:20 p.m. on November 5, that a woman was bleeding from her head at the Oswald Harris Court Housing Community.

According to documents before the V.I. Superior Court on Monday, Police from the Richard N Callwood Command arrived at the OHC Housing Community and met with several other police officers who were already on scene. They observed a black female victim, later identified as Laura Blyden on the ground with blood surrounding her. EMTs concluded that the woman, who sustained a puncture wound to the side of her neck, had no vital signs.

Investigations revealed that a radio transmission was given by a police officer who had received a phone call alerting that the suspect was in Building 2. While there, the suspect was said to be knocking on residents' doors trying to get inside to hide from the police.

When VIPD officers arrived at that location, they immediately identified Ahjahra Francis through prior VIPD contact, alone in the stairwell of the building. Francis was seen with blood all over his hands and blue jeans. He told VIPD officers that he got cut and needed to go to the hospital. He was then detained by officers and transported to the Richard N. Callwood Command where he was met by detectives of the Major Crimes Unit.

Francis alleged that the victim regularly sweeps her garbage in front of his doorway and that she was a grown woman and should pick up her garbage instead. He alleged that on the day in question, the victim was sweeping the stairway and while doing so, swept the dirt from the stairway in his face. Francis stated that the victim then went upstairs to get her son. He said the victim returned downstairs and continued to sweep the area. The two got into a scuffle, according to Francis, as the dirt met his face. He said he punched the victim in her face and she fell down, and then he ran to Building 2 of the OHC Housing Community. Francis further stated that he knocked on a friend's door because he was scared for his life and he wanted to get help.

While processing the scene, Forensics found the blade of a knife about 6 inches long, underneath the victim's head in her blood. When detectives searched Francis, they found what appeared to be a yellow plastic knife handle in Francis' left back pants pocket. Francis also suffered a laceration to this left thumb.

After giving his voluntary statement, Francis was placed under arrest.

In court on Monday, a judge ruled that Francis would be allowed to post 10 percent of his \$500,000 bail to secure his release. He must, however, obtain a suitable third-party custodian, other than his mother, and if released will be subject to electronic monitoring.

Francis will need to report to the Office of Probation twice a week and must not obtain a passport. He must also surrender his V.I. driver's license, and is to have no contact with the victim's family or any witnesses in the matter.

His next court appearance is November 23, 2022.