WOMEN AS ENDANGERED SPECIES: Unending tales of gruesome murder, rape scourge, kidnapping of ladies for rituals

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WOMEN AS ENDANGERED SPECIES: Unending tales of gruesome murder, rape scourge, kidnapping of ladies for rituals  
  
In a horrific tale of fear, tears and sorrow, Nigerians can no longer sleep with their two eyes closed. They are neither safe outside their homes nor inside. Sadly, many families have been left in pain and agony due to the sudden disappearance of their loved ones. The list of women and girls killed for rituals seems to be endless. ALAO ABIODUN examines the recurring killing of women and girls.  
  
When Christiana Idowu, a 300-level student of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State, left home last month, August 2024, she had no inkling that she would not return home. Her gruesome murder added to the growing number of women who have been savagely sent to their early graves.  
  
The atmosphere at the home of Christiana has been engulfed in grief for the past days. Their home has received more sympathisers than imagined since the incident.  
  
Christiana, who was kidnapped along the Ikorodu-Yaba road, met untimely her death in the hands of her abductors. She left her home in the Ita-oluwo area of Ikorodu, heading to the University of Lagos in the Yaba area of Lagos, where she was observing her industrial training before, she was abducted by the kidnappers.  
  
Lately, there has been a spike in the kidnapping, resulting in renewed security shocks. Reports emerge daily around the country outlining how assailants keep attacking and kidnapping citizens either for ransom, or ritual purposes.  
  
It is noteworthy that as the killings have been on the increase, both male and females have been victims. However, women seem to have more on the receiving end, as ritual killers hunting for body parts and rapists seem to be on the prowl.  
  
The mindless attacks on women have taken unimaginable proportions and dimensions. There have been many tales of woes for women and girls caught up in the web of the pervasive violence in public and private spaces.  
  
There exists an unaccountable number of other victims who are violated every day, every week, every month and every year. Is there still a safe space for women, with the incessant rape and murder? The audacity of rapists and paedophiles have taken dimensions, hitherto uncommon.  
  
The social media has indeed witnessed several hashtags for women who have been so gruesomely murdered. From #JusticeforUmuoren to #JusticeforOchanya, #JusticeforUwa, #JusticeforSofiat, #JusticeforBamise, #JusticeforBarakat, #JusticeforChristiana.  
  
According to a 2021 report by Amnesty International, efforts by the government to stop the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria have yielded little or no results.  
  
Accurate statistics of sexual violence against women in Nigeria are difficult to come by, essentially because insensitivity, and the fear of stigma (or persecution) discourage targets of sexual violence from formalising the reports of incidents.  
  
This reluctance, however, has only contributed to the rise in a culture of impunity on the part of the perpetrators.  
  
Unending scourge of killings  
  
Recent data suggests that the problem is escalating. According to the National Human Rights Commission, over 200 reported cases of ritual killings occurred in Nigeria between 2018 and 2020. The victims are often vulnerable individuals, including children, women, and the elderly. The perpetrators, often fuelled by greed and misguided beliefs, prey on innocent lives, leaving families and communities shattered.  
  
It is important to note that ritual killings are a complex issue, and no single factor can fully explain their occurrence. Addressing the social state of the perpetrators requires a comprehensive approach that involves education, economic empowerment, cultural sensitisation, and governance reform.  
  
Poverty, unemployment, and a lack of education create an environment where desperate individuals are preyed upon by unscrupulous ritualists. The belief in the efficacy of human body parts for wealth and power is fuelled by ignorance, superstition, and false narratives. Some individuals believe that human organs and body parts possess spiritual powers that can bring wealth, success, and protection. This belief is perpetuated by false narratives and superstitions by dishonest individuals.  
  
The victims of ritual killings are often victims of abduction and murder. In very rare circumstances, people belonging to one cult or the other do offer themselves to be used for sacrifices that will bring short-lived wealth and, even worse, a short life span.  
  
Women are becoming increasingly endangered, targeted for ritual killing. Some gullible ones often do not know that they are being hunted as they get lured to be killed by their supposed boyfriends and men wooing them for paid intimacy.  
  
Christiana Idowu  
  
Ayomide Adeleye, a 200 Level Philosophy student of the Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ogun State, confessed on Monday to killing Christianah Idowu, a 300 Level student of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB).  
  
His confession, made to the 174 Battalion of the Nigerian Army, brought an end to the two-week-long search for the girl.  
  
Idowu and Adeleye knew each other as they both schooled in Ogun State, attended the same church and lived in the same Ita-Oluwo community.  
  
Combined security efforts unravelled the whole mystery. Troops tracked Idowu’s phone to Adeleye’s residence in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State. He confessed to security agencies that he killed the victim and buried her in his house.  
  
The hashtag – #JusticeForChristiana is one of the top trends on Nigeria’s X (formerly Twitter), with over 100,000 posts as of the time of filing this report.  
  
His gory action drew the ire of many Nigerians on social media. Outraged by the incident, many Nigerians on Twitter, demanded justice for the victim, asking relevant stakeholders to ensure justice is served.  
  
The Nation learnt that intelligence operatives were able to uncover the location of the abductor through the BVN and account details used in collecting ransom from the family.  
  
Upon his arrest, the military found seven phones in Adeleye’s possession. They also found an email address he created to receive a statement of account confirming ransom payment.  
  
To apprehend him, the military obtained a SportyBet account he provided to Idowu’s mother; 9336380839 (Wema Bank), and froze the account after she paid N350,000 into it on August 21.  
  
After experiencing issues accessing the account, Adeleye demanded that a statement of account be sent to him via the email address: [email protected].  
  
The email address he created was a combination of two names; Musa and Ahmed, to match the persona he had donned to execute the con.  
  
On Sunday, September 1, the 174 Battalion tracked Idowu’s phone to Adeleye’s residence where they picked him up. He confessed to burying her in a shallow grave in his compound. During interrogation, Adeleye attempted to commit suicide but was restrained.  
  
Mojisola Awesu  
  
A graduate of the Kwara State College of Health Technology, Mojisola Awesu was invited to Ilorin, the state capital, by a dismissed student of Summit University, Offa, Adebayo Happiness, to act as his girlfriend at a party for a fee of N15,000.  
  
She was murdered in a hotel where she was lodged on Friday, August 9, 2024.  
  
The Police has since arrested about seven suspects involved in the alleged murder.  
  
Glory Adekolure  
  
The rape and gruesome murder of Glory Adekolure, a fresh graduate of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) is one that will not be forgotten in a hurry.  
  
The victim was reportedly raped and killed at Iyowa Community, Benin City, on 13 June 2024.  
  
Glory, 22, was on her way home after processing her clearance forms when she was abducted, tortured and raped to death by yet-to-be-identified persons.  
  
Her corpse was later dropped close to her mother’s house.  
  
Related News  
  
Bamise Ayanwole  
  
Still fresh in our memory is the dreadful killing of Miss Oluwabamise Ayanwole on February 26, 2022.  
  
The 22-year-old fashion designer who boarded a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Ajah, Lagos State around 7 p.m. after work was heading to her older brother’s place at Ota, Ogun State South-west Nigeria for the weekend.  
  
She was last heard of a few minutes later via the live post she made on the internet, after sensing danger on the bus, when the driver did not stop to pick up other passengers along the route that fateful day.  
  
Eunice Chioma Igweike  
  
The deceased, a graduate of the Federal Polytechnic, Oko, in Anambra State, was on her way to the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp, Sagamu, Ogun State, having been deployed to the Southwest state under the 2022 Batch B Service Year.  
  
She was abducted and allegedly taken to a ‘slaughter slab’, where she was butchered like an animal and her parts taken as articles of trade by human parts dealers.  
  
Her lacerated body was eventually discovered on July 29, almost nine days after she was abducted. All efforts to trace her abductors did not yield any positive result until the worst had happened.  
  
Vera Uwaila Omozuwa  
  
Vera Uwaila Omozuwa, a 100 level Microbiology student of University of Benin, was brutally raped and murdered in a church at Ikpoba Hill area of Benin-City.  
  
Uwaila, who went to read in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Miracle Sanctuary Mega Parish, Edo Province 10, Ikpoba Hill area of Benin City on May 27, 2020, was allegedly raped and assaulted by assailants.  
  
It was gathered that the men forced their way into the church, where they raped and struck Uwaila in the head with a fire extinguisher.  
  
Collins Ujegbulem, one of the six suspects paraded by the Edo State Police Command over the murder, claimed that a lady, Mary Adeh, paid them the sum of N1 million to kill the student for rituals.  
  
Iniobong Umoren  
  
On April 29, Iniobong Umoren, 26, a fresh graduate of the University of Uyo, left her home for a job interview at a location in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital.  
  
Umoren had graduated from the University of Uyo’s Department of Philosophy. She was waiting for her deployment for the mandatory National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) programme. Umoren was an orphan and was trying to earn a living before her NYSC year when Akpan killed her.  
  
The interview later turned out to be a hoax, as Umoren would become a rape and murder victim in the hands of Uduak Akpan, the supposed interviewer, at his residence.  
  
While confessing to the crime in July, Akpan claimed he had struck Umoren on the head with a stabilizer during a physical struggle, and this resulted in her death.  
  
After a nationwide outcry over the whereabouts of Umoren, her remains were found in a shallow grave in Akpan’s father’s compound.  
  
Barakat Bello  
  
For the family of Barakat Bello, June 2020 would be remembered as a year when rapists cut short the life of their daughter, a student of Department of Science Laboratory Technology (SLT), Federal College of Animal Health and Production in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital.  
  
The 18-year-old was attacked by some hoodlums who raped, then stabbed her to death at Akinyele Kara Market along Old Oyo Road, Ibadan.  
  
The attackers arrived at the home of the deceased possibly to rob them of their possessions. Upon seeing her in the bathroom, they decided to rape the young lady and subsequently macheted her till she gave up the ghost.  
  
According to her father, Kasimu Bello, the incident occurred when all other members of the family were not around. The only person at home at the time of the attack was her younger sister.  
  
Following the incident, many Nigerians stormed the social media to demand justice for the late Barakat with the #JusticeForBarakat.  
  
Favour Okechukwu  
  
It sounds bizarre but true. An 11-year-old girl, Favour Okechukwu, was gang-raped in Lagos. The bloodcurdling incident happened at Olanrewaju street in Ejigbo area of the state.  
  
According to reports, the victim, on returning from school was sent to buy a carton of gala, a popular snack from a nearby shop when four men lured her to a room and raped her to death.  
  
The suspects, realising that the girl was dead, abandoned her and fled. The victim’s father, Dickson Okechukwu on returning from work discovered her naked body in the room after a frantic search for her.  
  
Justina Otuene Nkang  
  
Okoligwe Damian Chinemere, a 400-level Engineering student at the University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), killed Justina Otuene Nkang, his girlfriend, who is a 300-level student of Biological Chemistry in the same university.  
  
Justina’s dead body was found mutilated in her boyfriend’s house a few days after she was declared missing.  
  
Reports say that the killer was trying to dispose of the corpse wrapped in a polythene bag when he was caught.  
  
Precious Okeke  
  
In April 2022, Ifeanyi Njoku, a 28-year-old Lagos State resident, was arrested for killing Precious Okeke, his 24-year-old girlfriend, in the Ajah area of Lagos State.  
  
Njoku admitted to killing his girlfriend for money rituals. The police revealed that a native doctor, who was assisting Njoku in the money ritual project, had instructed him to have sex with Okeke’s corpse.  
  
The killer had engaged in the illicit act with his girlfriend’s corpse for six days before the stench emanating from his apartment made his neighbours alert the police.  
  
Outrage has continued to grow over these heinous crimes, but beyond public rage, the worrying question is: who will be the next victim? Every girl or woman now lives in fear, as nobody knows who the next casualty would be. This is because the government has failed to check the rising cases of violence against women. As the society tries to deal with one incident, another seems to pop up somewhere else, but the epidemic did not just start with the recent cases.