Man bags life imprisonment for raping, impregnating minor

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The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court, Maitama, Abuja, on Tuesday, sentenced a man to life imprisonment for raping and impregnating a minor.  
  
The court found Abdulhameed Ahmed, 27, guilty of raping the girl, who was 15 years old as of the time of the incident.  
  
Judge Sylvanus Oriji agreed with the prosecution’s case, holding that the defendant did not just have sexual intercourse with the girl, but did so with her as of the time she was underage.  
  
“The prosecution proved the elements of the offence beyond reasonable doubt,” Mr Oriji ruled.  
  
After declaring the defendant guilty, the judge sentenced him to life imprisonment.  
  
Mr Ahmed was arraigned in 2024 on one count of raping the survivor.  
  
The prosecution said Mr Ahmed raped the minor four times in Angwan Fulani, Aso Lugbe, Abuja, between January 2022 and January 2023.  
  
He allegedly lured the girl, promising to gift her a mobile phone.  
  
He was charged under section 31 of the Child’s Rights Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which criminalises having a sexual intercourse with a child.  
  
The provision clarifies that when a person is charged under this section, it is immaterial that the offender believed the person to be of or above the age of 18 years; or that the sexual intercourse was with the consent of the child.  
  
It prescribes life imprisonment for the offender upon conviction.  
  
Cases made by prosecution and defence  
  
The defence counsel, Oluwatobilola Akinbiyi, argued that the defendant had expressed the desire to enter into an emotional relationship with the victim without any criminal intent.  
  
Mr Akinyibi also noted that under Islamic laws, marriage to any lady past puberty was acceptable.  
  
However, the prosecution counsel, Ammeh Ammeh, faulted the Islamic law defence relied on by the defendants.  
  
He said the defence did not apply to the case of impregnating a minor and that the FCT is not governed by Sharia law.  
  
He noted that according to Section 21(1) of the Child’s Rights Act, a girl below 18 is prohibited from marriage.  
  
Judgement  
  
The judge upheld the prosecution’s argument.  
  
“There is no evidence that it is proper or permissible under Islamic law for a man to have sexual intercourse with a child or minor before marriage,” Mr Oriji ruled.  
  
Rape of minors  
  
This case is notable for its relatively swift conclusion particularly given the prevalence of rape cases, where offenders are rarely brought to justice, often only after extended trials.  
  
In many instances, prosecution fatigue leads to the abandonment of cases or the failure to present witnesses and evidence in court, resulting in the acquittal of offenders.  
  
In January, PREMIUM TIMES compiled some rape cases to be noted in the year, reflecting a troubling trend that persists and signals the heightened risks girls potentially face from sexual predators in the new year.