NHRC reports spike in rape cases

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The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), on Wednesday, reported a spike in rape incidents tracked in February.  
  
The commission disclosed this in the February Dashboard Presentation.  
  
Presenting the February report at the NHRC headquarters in Abuja, the Senior Adviser to the commission, Hilary Ogbonna, noted that while rape cases were under-reported in previous reports, the commission recorded an upsurge between January and February.  
  
“For the first time, we are reporting an increase in rape. Prior to now, we have always maintained that the statistics we have for rape indicate that rape incidents are under-reported or not reported at all. But between January and February, we have seen an upsurge in the reports that we did,” Mr Ogbonna said.  
  
He said the commission tracked 341 rape cases of rape in February as against 51 recorded in January.  
  
In January, PREMIUM TIMES reported a worrying trend of rape incidents around the country.  
  
The NHRC’s February Dashboard report revealed 205,364 human rights complaints received in the month, a 25 per cent surge in the number of complaints recorded in January.  
  
Issues in focus  
  
Some of the issues in focus in February include mass killings and abductions in the North-west and North-central, cult-related activities which claimed the lives of five persons in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and 4 in Markudi, Benue State, inter- and intra-communal violence and extra-judicial killings by law enforcement officers.  
  
Also, the commission noted the resurgence of Boko Haram activities, an increase in rape cases and a rise in suicide cases. According to the NHRC, two police officers and two students committed suicide. It added that 144 persons were kidnapped in the North-west and North-central.  
  
Complaints by regions  
  
The North-central recorded the highest number of complaints. Mr Ogbonna attributed this to the highest number of receiving points the region has.  
  
The North-east has the second highest number of complaints, followed by the South-East, South-south, North-west and lastly South-west, in that order.  
  
Thematic violations of human rights  
  
The commission noted the following trends in the complaints recorded in February. Law enforcement and human dignity topped the charts of violations with over 50,000 complaints received.  
  
The Executive Secretary of the NHRC, Tony Ojukwu, noted that this remained a grave concern. Mr Ojukwu, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, said that despite efforts and calls for accountability among law enforcement officers, they continued in perpetrating human rights violations.  
  
“The use of power must always align with human rights standards, and any abuses must be swiftly addressed,” he said.  
  
The second and third trends of violation in February were the rights to freedom of religion and economic, social, and cultural rights.  
  
Mr Ojukwu said, “Access to basic necessities such as food, housing, healthcare, and education remains a challenge for far too many. We must take urgent steps to address these disparities and work toward policies that ensure equitable access for all Nigerians.”  
  
Noticeable among the trend of women’s rights violations is spousal abandonment. The commission recorded over 7,000 complaints of spousal abandonment. Mr Ogbonna while presenting the report, explained that spousal abandonment had a ripple effect not only on women but also on children.  
  
Similarly, child abandonment is also among top complaints on the chart of child rights-related complaints. According to the NHRC, over 1400 children were abandoned in February.  
  
The NHRC’s boss noted the tragic killings of three children in Anambra State.  
  
PREMIUM TIMES reported how hoodlums killed three siblings – a boy and two girls – and dumped their bodies in a freezer at Nnewichi, a community in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra.  
  
In an effort to protect the rights of children, the commission’s chief announced the approval of the Child Safeguarding Policy aimed at protecting children and young persons who use the services of the NHRC.  
  
NHRC raises concern about new laws  
  
The NHRC also raised concerns about new laws and a proposed law prescribing death as as a penalty for crimes.  
  
The laws are the Edo State Secret Cult and Similar Activities (Prohibition) Law 2025, the Edo State Kidnapping Prohibition Law 2025 and the Anambra Homeland Security Law 2025, all enacted in February.  
  
The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC) also proposed a death penalty for counterfeit drugs.  
  
Mr Ojukwu said these laws and proposals by the NAFDAC had significant implications on human rights due to the death sentences they promote.  
  
“it is crucial to ensure that the rights of the accused are upheld and that justice is administered in a manner consistent with international human rights standards,” he said.  
  
In many parts of the world, capital punishment has been abolished. The United Nations General Assembly in 1971 passed a resolution that restricted the number of offences death penalties should be imposed.