Prosecution lawyer’s absence stalls trader’s trial for child rape

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The absence of prosecution cou Hafsat Ibrahim, on Tuesday, stalled the trial of a trader, Mohammed Sani, charged with raping an underage girl.  
  
The National Agency for Prohibition and Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) charged Mr Sani with two counts of defilement.  
  
Defence lawyer Ibrahim Jibril told the court that it was the fourth time the matter was adjourned at the instance of the prosecution.  
  
“In the interest of justice we would be seeking for a date,” Mr Jibril said.  
  
Trial judge Kezziah Ogbonnaya adjourned the matter till June 24 and ordered for the prosecution counsel to be notified of the new date.  
  
The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the prosecution alleged that the defendant defiled a 13-year-old girl at Apo Resettlement, Abuja, sometime in 2022.  
  
She added that the defendant made the girl engage in sexual act to the detriment of her physical and psychological wellbeing.  
  
The offence, she said, contravened the provisions of sections 1(1), (2) and 5(1) of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act, 2015.  
  
The defendant, however, pleaded not guilty.  
  
Lack of diligent prosecution of rape cases, particularly those involving minors, raises significant concerns about the government’s handling of such serious offences.  
  
Sexual abuse is an is an extremely traumatic experience for individuals of all ages, with a particularly devastating impact on minors that can cause lasting harm to their social life, mental health, and overall development.  
  
Despite the prevalence of these cases, 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.  
  
It has been observed that a failed prosecution in a single case of child rape is highly detrimental in a country where many incidents go unreported or are not adequately pursued by law enforcement agencies.  
  
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.  
  
(NAN)