Court remands hotelier over alleged sexual assault in Minna

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A Niger Senior Magistrate’s court sitting in Minna has remanded a hotelier, Friday Okechukwu in correctional custody for allegedly assaulting a married woman sexually.  
  
  
  
Okechukwu was arraigned before Magistrate Christy Barau on a six-count charge bordering on enticement of a married woman, wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement, assault or criminal force to a woman, with intent to outrage her modesty, rape and criminal intimidation.  
  
According to the Police First Information Report marked: CMC/MN/CR/107/2023, the offences were punishable under sections 389, 256, 257, 283(1) and 397(A) of the penal code.  
  
Okechukwu, who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of Unfadable International Hotel, Eastern Bye pass, Minna, was arraigned by officials of the Anti-Women and Domestic Violence squad of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), of the Niger State Police Command.  
  
According to the police, a direct criminal complaint was lodged at the Senior Magistrate’s Court, Chanchaga, on September 22 by the victim, which was referred to the police for discreet investigation.  
  
The police prosecutor, Inspector Lawrence Mowete, told the court that sometime in August 2023, the defendant saw a Neolife supplement drugs vendor’s advertisement on Facebook, and followed her Facebook page.  
  
According to him, Okechukwu started chatting with her, and requested her phone number with the pretense that he wanted to patronise her business.  
  
  
  
He further told the court that after the victim gave her phone number to Okechukwu, he called her and invited her to his hotel in Minna for physical display of her Neolife products, to which he also requested for her bank account details to enable him to transfer money for the products.  
  
“She obliged and gave him her Polaris Bank Account and having received the same, Okechukwu sent her Airtel recharge airtime of N1,000 directly from his phone and later sent her N10,000 on September 8.  
  
“When she inquired from him what the money was meant for, the defendant told her that the money was for her hair-do and the airtime sent on two occasions was to recharge her telephone line .  
  
“She called the defendant back and requested that he send his account number for the refund, but he refused.  
  
“Immediately she cashed the money, the victim carried her seven months old baby boy along and took the money to the defendant in his hotel on September 12, with intent to refund the money to him personally after he refused to send his bank account number.  
  
“On getting to the hotel, Okechukwu lured her into a room in the said hotel room tagged: “Comfort Zone 03.  
  
“In the said hotel, the defendant locked the doors of the hotel room, and hid the keys in his pocket and fearing for her safety, the victim stood up to leave the room but Okechukwu restrained her, confined her from leaving the room, and violently dragged her into the bed in the room.  
  
“As she struggled to free herself, her cloth and the strap of herbs on her got torn and the defendant forcefully had sexual intercourse with the victim without her consent in the presence of her crying seven months old baby boy.”  
  
According to the prosecutor, upon the receipt of the information, police detectives swung into action and effected the defendant’s arrest. During a police investigation, the victim was able to identify him.  
  
When the charges were read to Okechukwu, he pleaded not guilty to the charges. But the prosecutor objected to his bail on the ground that one of the charges is only triable in the High court and not the Magistrate’s court.  
  
He told the court that the police will forward the case file to the state Ministry of Justice for legal advice, and requested that the defendant be remanded in the correctional custody pending the outcome of the legal advice .  
  
Consequently, the Magistrate ordered Okechukwu’s remand, and adjourned to November 13, for hearing.