Court sentences Abuja bishop to 20 years for rape

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As NAPTIP busts baby factory, rescues nine  
  
A Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court sitting in Gudu has sentenced Bishop Kenneth Duke, a prominent church founder in Abuja, to 20 years imprisonment without an option of fine for the rape of a 12-year-old girl.  
  
  
  
Justice Adebiyi Osolo handed down the sentence after the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) charged the 52-year-old bishop, an indigene of Cross River State, for assaulting the minor, who had been entrusted to his care. The offence contravenes the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015.  
  
In case number CR/702/2023, Federal Republic of Nigeria Vs Bishop Kenneth Duke, the defendant was arraigned on November 2, 2023, on a two-count charge of rape and causing emotional and psychological harm to the victim.  
  
NAPTIP’s investigation revealed that the victim, an indigene of Ondo State, had been living in Lagos before moving to Abuja to live with her mother. On March 5, 2023, her mother took her to the bishop’s church, where she later stayed with the bishop’s family under the arrangement for the child to learn a skill.  
  
On March 6, 2023, while alone with the girl, Duke allegedly assaulted her.  
  
NAPTIP confirmed that the bishop was found guilty of rape and sentenced accordingly.  
  
Reacting to the conviction, NAPTIP’s Director-General Binta Bello commended the judiciary for its decision, noting that it would serve as a deterrent to others.  
  
“I want to sincerely thank the judiciary for this judgment. It will certainly serve as a deterrent to others,” Bello said, stressing that NAPTIP would continue to hold offenders accountable regardless of their status.  
  
Bello further emphasised the serious impact of sexual violence. “Rape is a serious crime with lasting psychological effects on the victim. We must all rise to say no to this heinous crime and ensure the protection of our children,” she added.  
  
The development followed the rescue of nine pregnant girls by NAPTIP operatives at a suspected baby factory located within one of the sprawling estates in the Ushafa area of Abuja.  
  
The victims had been locked in a rented apartment inside the estate by a suspected trafficking agent, whose identity remains unknown, after being recruited through an online platform.  
  
NAPTIP operatives carried out the raid following a tip-off from a concerned citizen who noticed unusual activity and movement around the area.