Emerging controversy on rape and punishment

Date: 2023-03-01

Source: https://guardian.ng/opinion/emerging-controversy-on-rape-and-punishment/

Sir: Following my letter titled: Life imprisonment for rapists is an overkill, published in the February 8th edition of The Guardian, I was pleased to read a rejoinder on the same issue by one very brilliant fellow, Mr. Yahaya Balogun, who works as a Correctional Officer IV in Arizona, United States of America.  
  
  
  
In his letter published in the Sunday, February 19th edition of The Guardian, Mr. Balogun criticised my view where I argued that giving life imprisonment to rapists was too much. To him, I was wrong in canvassing for lesser punishment for rapists and that such a stance runs contrary to the principles of the group, Ethics Watch International, which I coordinate.  
  
As soon as I read through his well-articulated rejoinder, I hurried to search through the Internet for what’s obtainable in other climes including the U.S. where Balogun resides and works. From my findings, there are differences in the sentences handed down to rapists abroad and in America especially, depending on the circumstances and severity of the offence, and also depending on whether it’s a state or federal case.  
  
The sentences range from 20 to 30 years and in some cases, life. I have no doubt that the rape cases attracting life sentence will be those ones involving loss of lives.  
  
Jide Oyewusi, coordinator of Ethics Watch International, Lagos.  
  
  
  
Now, my own argument is that most cases of rape in Nigeria are committed out of ignorance by people, mostly youths who have no prior criminal records and that sentencing them to life imprisonment was an overkill.  
  
As a matter of fact, I recommended 10 years as enough to teach such first offenders a serious lesson. It’s not as if I support rape or any type of criminality for that matter as no sane or right-thinking person will do so. But I also believe very strongly that sometimes, there’s need to temper justice with mercy.  
  
If in Nigeria of today, any adult who sleeps with any teenager regarded as a minor is to be considered as a rapist, then most of Nigeria’s youth corpers and single male teachers would likely end up in jail because this is something that is very common among many of them even though most times, it goes unnoticed.  
  
Besides, most married men are also guilty of rape as they sometimes forcefully climb their wives when she’s not in the mood but they refuse bluntly to let her be.  
  
The issue of human sexuality is so dicey that in the Christian’s Holy Bible, Jesus Christ was said to have dared anyone thinking he’s a saint, who accused another of such sin, to cast the first stone.  
  
The same Christ also explained that it’s not only when the action is done physically that one commits the crime, it can also happen in the mind when one looks at the opposite sex lustfully.