FG pledges to stem growing rate of rape

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With alarming figure of 717 reported cases of rape between January and May, the Federal Government has promised to do everything possible to stem the growing tide of the “pandemic”.  
  
The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed made the pledge on Thursday in Abuja when officials of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) paid him an advocacy visit.  
  
“According to the Inspector-General of Police, between January and May 2020, a total of 717 rape cases were reported.  
  
  
  
“That is an average of 143 cases per month and around five cases per day.  
  
“And we are talking of reported cases. Definitely, there are also hundreds of unreported cases.  
  
“This is totally unacceptable.  
  
“The good news is that 799 suspects were arrested during the same period, while 631 cases were conclusively investigated and charged to court.  
  
“It is said that the true measure of a society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members and that include women and children.  
  
  
  
“I can assure you that the Federal Government will do everything possible to stem the growing tide of rape and gender-based violence in the country,” the minister said.  
  
Mohammed disclosed that his ministry was partnering with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs to launch a national campaign against rape and gender-based violence.  
  
He said the campaign would include advocacy, public sensitisation and social mobilisation.  
  
“The campaign is necessary not only to raise the level of awareness about rape and gender-based violence but to ensure that Nigerians own the fight against the abhorrent and repulsive criminal acts.  
  
“I have no doubt that when we launch the campaign, the National Human Rights Commission will also join us,” he said.  
  
The minister commended the NHRC for its ongoing advocacy campaign against rape and gender-based violence.  
  
  
  
“Your campaign couldn’t have come at a more auspicious time.  
  
“Today, as we are fighting the pandemic of COVID-19, we are also being confronted with another pandemic, the pandemic of rape,” he said.  
  
Earlier, the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Mr Tony Ojukwu said “rape is a gross violation of human rights – the right to dignity, right to life, right to sexuality.’’  
  
Ojukwu said the public outrage on account of rape and other violent crimes against women and girls leading to the death of some of the victims had reached a horrifying and scary proportion in recent times.  
  
He, therefore, called for all hands to be on deck to address this pervasive crime in society.  
  
He said the commission had put together week-long activism with the theme: “Equality and Dignity for Nigerian Women, Join the Fight against Rape and SGBV’’ to among others create and maintain visibility on the crime.  
  
Ojukwu called on the minister to use his office to join other key stakeholders in the quest for a durable solution to the national challenge.