Group condemns pressure on rape victims

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THE coordinator of Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT), Mrs. Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi, has urged residents to desist from pressurizing rape victims to settle out of court.  
  
Victims, she said, should rather be encouraged to speak out in order to stem the tide of rape cases in the country.  
  
Speaking on the recent pressure being mounted on the mother of a 10-year-old girl, who was allegedly defiled by her neighbour, Mr Segun Mayowa Adeyemi, to settle out of court, Mrs. Vivour-Adeniyi said the case epitomized the undue external pressures faced by victims and their relatives to have rape matters settled out of court.  
  
Describing rape as a crime against the state, which matter the Attorney-General has the sole power to discontinue, she said several people, namely: the landlord, siblings of the defendant, a lady who says she lives on Bourdillon and even the lawyer had called to beg that the matter be settled out of court.  
  
“Even the landlord had threatened to evict the mother of the victim from the house if she refused to drop the case.”  
  
“But they have all been informed that these are issues that the state government is interested in and the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) had already requested for the duplicate case file to be forwarded to the office,” she added.  
  
The Mirabel Centre, a sexual assault referral centre set up by an NGO, Partnership for Justice, was contacted when the mother discovered upon inspecting her daughter’s private part that there was semen there.  
  
“Immediately her daughter told her what happened, she called the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) and informed them. They came 30 minutes after and then invited the suspect to Alapere police station for questioning. At the station, the victim was referred to the Mirabel centre for medical attention.  
  
“The victim’s mother subsequently informed DVSRT that her landlord had verbally threatened her that if she didn’t drop the case, he would evict her from the house.”  
  
“In order to assuage her fears, she was referred to the Citizens’ Mediation Centre where her complaint was made.”  
  
“The IPO of the case was contacted and status update about the case was gotten. The medical evidence of the victim corroborated the oral testimony of the victim.”  
  
“Oworonshoki Police Station charged the alleged rapist to court and the matter came up at Magistrate Court 7, On Monday, August, 24, 2015 and was adjourned to October 12, 2015.”  
  
“It was also discovered that the lawyer representing the defendant was urging the victim to settle out of court, that the family was ready to pay for all expenses she had incurred,” Vivour-Adeniyi added.