Nigeria’s rape reprisals

Date: 2020-07-12

Source: https://guardian.ng/opinion/nigerias-rape-reprisals/

Sir: Repeated attacks on the society`s most vulnerable invariably betrays a society where survival is for the fittest and life is scandalously cheap. From the time Diana and later Tamar were raped in the bible, and by her half-brother in the case of the latter, rape as ugly as it sounds and is has always been a feature of every society. Vicious attacks of sexual nature have often been weaponised as man has sought to gain control and wield power over another.  
  
In recent times, rape has also come to become a choice weapon of war. To put the problem in proper perspective, rape and rapists are not just the ugly experiences of specific places where men can be accused of an unbridled libido, but a widespread plague shredding human dignity and strangling life. Given the silence which rape wears like an impregnable armour, things must have really got to a head in Nigeria to provoke the unique situation where many rape stories have floated to the fore and victims have found their voices to name their attackers.  
  
Nigerians have been truly inundated with many rape experiences of late, some grotesquely gruesome, to the extent that a rallying cry against the monster has found a rare unity across the length and breadth of the country. Women, recognizing the mortal danger posed to themselves and their children, have been at the forefront of the campaign. Some men have joined them. It is conceivable that more men would have joined the campaign but for the inescapable feeling that there is a potential rapist in every man and the guilt that comes with that feeling.  
  
Rape in all its many ugly shades presents a backbreaking challenge. When it occurs, toxic shame sires an oppressive silence that is deadlier than the mostincendiary words. The victims are mostly unable to step into the open and confront their abusers because the society has fostered a culture of shame around rape where the victim is blamed because the rapist is considered too powerful and too privileged. The Nigerian legal firmament is replete with innumerable instances where rapists have lined up to face the uniquely potent social castration that the judicial process can hand out, but there is an oppressive feeling in many quarters that Nigeria`s anti- rape laws are weak and their implementation even weaker. In a society that struggles to outdo itself in emphasizing and extending inequality, women have unjustifiably borne the brunt of the gender inequality that so starkly projects itself in the act of rape. T  
  
he struggle for gender equality is as ancient as it is universal. From time immemorial, women have fought to be equal with men in the many battlegrounds that life throws up. From across the other side of the divide, the men who know the invaluable benefits gender inequality can bring have joined the fight. But the number has been small and the voices weak. Those plagued by the paranoia of women finding their voices and footing in the society still hold sway over large swaths of the world. Because this group consists of insufferable hypocrites who publicly pretend to stand with women against rape and gender inequality but privately let their manhood run loose to put down women, the battle for gender equality is far from won. Rape humiliates humanity as a whole. It is a savagely primal act that violates the invaluable primacy of choice and sees man descend to the lowliness of wild animals.  
  
Rape no matter where it occurs and who is the victim shames and dehumanizes all of us. It is time for action. And as repugnant as the calls for rapists to be castrated are, anti-rape laws must be made most stringent and their implementation beholden only to the strictest sensibilities of justice. The anti-rape message as well as the need for gender equality must be stridently pushed to all the nooks and crannies of the country and the world as well as the darkest recesses of the human mind where rape is conceived. The time is today for what stares us square in the face is an irreparable and irredeemable injury to our collective human dignity.  
  
• Kene Obiezu, wrote from Abuja.