Teacher gets life in prison for raping 13 students, impreganting 8

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An Indonesian court Tuesday sentenced a teacher to life in prison for the rape of 13 students, in a case that has drawn national attention to sexual abuse in some of the country’s religious boarding schools.  
  
  
  
Bandung district court in West Java found Herry Wirawan guilty of raping 13 female students, all minors, and impregnating at least eight of them.  
  
During the trial, it was revealed he had raped the children — many from poor families attending the school on scholarships — over five years.  
  
The pattern of abuse came to light when the family of a female student reported Wirawan to the police for raping and impregnating their teenage daughter last year.  
  
The revelations have sparked national outrage, with a senior government official saying President Joko Widodo has paid special attention to the case.  
  
Prosecutors had asked for chemical castration and the death penalty for the accused.  
  
Wirawan, 36, arrived in court in handcuffs and kept his head down as judge Yohannes Purnomo Suryo Adi sentenced him to life in prison.  
  
He had asked the judge for leniency to allow him to raise his children.  
  
  
  
The court also said restitution for victims will be paid by the government.  
  
Chairman of National Child Protection Commission Susanto told AFP that Tuesday’s verdict meant that “justice for the victims has been served.”  
  
More than 25,000 Islamic boarding schools — known as “pesantren” — are dotted across Indonesia, with nearly five million students living and studying in the dorms.  
  
Teaching is often regimented — students attend regular classes during the day and continue Koranic studies and Islamic teachings into the evening.  
  
The Bandung rape case has shone a spotlight on the problem of sexual abuse in some of the schools, with 14 out of the 18 cases reported to the National Child Protection Commission last year taking place in pesantren.  
  
Last year two teachers at a boarding school in South Sumatra were arrested for sexually abusing 26 male students over the course of a year.  
  
And in 2020, a boarding school leader in East Java was sentenced to 15 years in prison for sexually assaulting 15 female students.  
  
President Joko Widodo last month called on parliament to approve a bill on the “elimination of sexual violence”, which seeks to combat sex crimes and provide justice to victims, including in cases of marital rape.  
  
The bill was drafted in 2016 but has run into delays, with Islamic groups complaining it promoted promiscuity and conservative lawmakers calling for it to criminalize extramarital sex and LGBT relationships.