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Today, the voices of hunger, the voices of insecurity and the voices of COVID-19 have been almost drowned with the voices of rape. At least within the life period of this administration, no demonstration has thrived without being met with brutal force by both the Police and the Army, except that of the cry for help for rape victims. No wonder everyone is demonstrating, calls are made during the protest, which seems to be same, for stiff penalty against the rapist.  
  
For once, the whole country is in unison in the cry for justice for the victims and stiff penalty for the rapists. The media houses are awash with news on rape.  
  
I congratulate those who have come to demonstrate, those who have spoken about it and the media houses who have made it possible for it to be heard. The question is this: Is the Rape Law going to be like others, where the masses either do not know of its existence or what to do to get justice?  
  
  
  
The child’s Rights Act has been in existence since 2003. How many states have domesticated it to make it enforceable? What is the reason for the refusal for its domestication? Will the rape law not suffer the same fate as the Child’s Rights Act? These are issues that must be identified and spelt out to give the law on rape we are all clamouring for the teeth it deserves.  
  
Let us leave the enforcement of the law until it is made and its subsequent awareness creation for the time being. The good thing is that the problem has been identified, and the worrisome aspect of rape in Nigeria today is “the increase in the number of cases recorded” since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.  
  
According to the police report, from the time of the COVID-19 lockdown till middle of May, 717 rape cases were recorded. Surprisingly again, from that May till the middle of June, 799 cases have been recorded. And we are only talking of the reported and recorded cases!  
  
The fear now is that rape is becoming a “pandemic” competing with COVID-19 in Nigeria. To stop this pandemic we must ask the following questions?  
  
First, what is the cause of the increase in rape? Could it be as a result of pornography, mental health crisis situation etc?  
  
Why should we concentrate our drug addiction regulations only or Marijuana, Tramadol, Cocaine, etc, without extending it to sex desire enhancement and sex organ enhancement drugs, which circulate freely with pornography among the populace, who are incapable of controlling themselves after taking drugs and watching the films?  
  
Secondly, Is there really an increase or is it because records are now being kept and culprits apprehended more as a result of more whistle blowing? Why exactly is the spike?  
  
It has also been notice that cases of suicide have increased showing mental health deterioration in the society. Could this be attributed to the increase on rape? And in what environments do we have rape most prevalent?  
  
Is it in open places, family settings, IDP camps or what?  
  
It is most interesting to note that places like school environments are excluded due to lockdown. Same applies to churches, recreational grounds, night clubs, so where are the rape cases coming from?  
  
Answer to these questions will go a long way to sort out our problem on rape.  
  
So based on the following, our legislators must get to work to present a Bill on rape and pass it with immediate effect.  
  
The security agencies on their part must also investigate and carry out a forensic research to ascertain why rape cases have increased and the most prevalent locations.  
  
Prosecution of such cases must be in the State High Courts, and a reasonable time limit must be given to Judges and Lawyers for the dispensation of justice on rape cases.  
  
Most importantly the public must be sensitized on the desired attention that a “Rape Case” deserves and for the collective search for the solution of rape problem in our country, Nigeria.  
  
Odife, national coordinator, Women’s Organisation for Gender Issues (WOGI), wrote from Abuja.