AI accuses Nigerian military of raping thousands of displaced women

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AI accuses Nigerian military of raping thousands of displaced women  
  
Amnesty International (AI) has accused the Nigerian military and Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian JTF) of indiscriminately raping thousands of displaced women in camps in the Northeast.  
  
According to AI, instead of receiving protection from the authorities, women and girls are forced to succumb to rape in order to avoid starvation or hunger.  
  
Country Director AI Nigeria, Osai Ojigho said that it is shocking that people who had already suffered so much under Boko Haram have been condemned to further horrendous abuse by the Nigerian military.  
  
Contained in a report that was released Thursday in Abuja titled, ‘they betrayed us: women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved and detained in Nigeria.’  
  
Ojigho added that scores of women described how soldiers and Civilian JTF members have used force and threats to rape women in satellite camps, including by taking advantage of hunger to coerce women to become their girlfriends.  
  
He words, “Thousands of women and girls who survived the brutal rule of the Boko Haram armed group have since been further abused by the Nigerian security forces who claim to be rescuing them.  
  
”They betrayed us” reveals how the Nigerian military and Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian JTF) a militia who work alongside them have separated women from their husbands and confined them in remote “satellite camps” where they have been raped, sometimes in exchange for food. Amnesty International has collected evidence that thousands of people have starved to death in the camps in Borno state, north-east Nigeria, since 2015.  
  
“It is absolutely shocking that people who had already suffered so much under Boko Haram have been condemned to further horrendous abuse by the Nigerian military.  
  
“Instead of receiving protection from the authorities, women and girls have been forced to succumb to rape in order to avoid starvation or hunger.  
  
“In some cases, the abuse appears to be part of a pattern of persecution of anyone perceived to have a connection to Boko Haram. Women reported being beaten and called “Boko Haram wives” by the security officials when they complained about their treatment.  
  
“As Nigeria’s military recovered territory from the armed group in 2015, it ordered people living in rural villages to the satellite camps, in some cases indiscriminately killing those who remained in their homes. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled or were forced from these areas. The military screened everyone arriving to the satellite camps, and in some locations detained most men and boys aged between 14 and 40 as well as women who travelled unaccompanied by their husbands. The detention of so many men has left women to care for their families alone.  
  
“Scores of women described how soldiers and Civilian JTF members have used force and threats to rape women in satellite camps, including by taking advantage of hunger to coerce women to become their “girlfriends”, which involved being available for sex on an ongoing basis.  
  
“Five women told Amnesty International that they were raped in late 2015 and early 2016 in Bama Hospital camp as famine-like conditions prevailed.  
  
“Ama (not her real name), 20, said: “They will give you food but in the night they will come back around 5pm or 6pm and they will tell you to come with them… One [Civilian JTF] man came and brought food to me. The next day he said i should take water from his place [and I went]. He then closed the tent door behind me and raped me. He said I gave you these things, if you want them we have to be husband and wife”.  
  
Ten others in the same camp said that they were also coerced into becoming “girlfriends” of security officials to save themselves from starvation. Most of these women had already lost children or other relatives due to lack of food, water and healthcare in the camp. The sexual exploitation continues at an alarming level as women remain desperate to access sufficient food and livelihood opportunities.”  
  
The Senator representing Kaduna Central, Shehu Sani who was present at the launch assured that he is going to raise the issue at the floor of the Senate and will ensure that all senators are presented with the report.