Dealing with rape scourge

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SIR: In Nigeria today, no day passes without one being served with unsavoury tales of rape that churn the stomach. Indeed rape in Nigeria has reached an epidemic level. From six-month-old babies to toddlers, teenagers to septuagenarians, it appears no one is insulated from the havoc the restless nozzles of the Rasputins on rampage across the country.  
  
In spite of the ear-aching daily newspaper reports about the scourge of rape, the crime is arguably Nigeria’s most underreported crime. Victims are held down by a number of reasons ranging from fear, shame, threat to their lives and families by their tormentors, et al.  
  
In a country where people are quick to blame victims of rape for their ordeal by accusing them of dressing indecently, or positioning themselves for rape, or simply accuse victims of making up stories for ulterior motives, it is understandable if victims choose to remain silent till thy kingdom come; especially when they have a slim chance of getting justice.  
  
Recently, for instance, yours truly’s neighbour lamented how pained he was that a close friend of his was accosted and raped on her way to her workplace in the wee hours of the morning. But reporting the case was not an option for the victim and her friend. They were certain they would not get justice because of their zero confidence in Nigeria’s institutions.  
  
Also worthy of mention is the Dakolo-Fatoyinbo rape controversy. While it may not be right to nail Pastor Biodun Fatoyinbo to the cross based on the allegations raised by Busola Dakolo until the court so pronounce, there are Nigerians who have already given their verdict and labelled the woman a bloody opportunist who only wanted to be ‘settled’ by the pastor, among other ridiculous conclusions. It explains why many victims would just place their tormentors’ case files on God’s table and just move on with their lives as if nothing happened.  
  
But Nigeria does not have the monopoly of sexual criminals. According to a survey conducted by Thomas Reuters Foundation in 2018, India emerged the world’s most dangerous country for women. Reuters report took into consideration the risks women face from sexual violence and harassment, cultural and traditional practices, sex slavery, human trafficking, among others. Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria occupy second, third, fourth, fifth and ninth positions respectively.  
  
Beyond the lamentation that the rising wave of rape has provoked, it is about time we had special courts for rape cases to fast track quick dispensation of justice. Nigeria will also be the winner if we remake our laws to accommodate execution of perpetrators the crime.  
  
Truth be told, having anti-rape laws is not enough. The Nigerian government must ensure enforcement of the laws to protect women against rape. Former UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative on sexual violence, Margot Wallstrom was right when she quipped,” If women continue to suffer sexual violence, it is not because the law is inadequate to protect them, but because it is inadequately enforced.”  
  
We must make concerted efforts to deplete the burgeoning population of the rapists among us.  
  
Ladesope Ladelokun,  
  
[email protected]