NHRC urges rape victims to speak up

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NHRC urges rape victims to speak up  
  
From Nicholas Kalu, Abuja  
  
The National Human Rights Commission has called on rape victims to speak up and expose their abusers no matter how long it has been that the sexual abuse occurred.  
  
Executive Secretary of the Commission, Mr Tony Ojukwu, said the Commission would support anyone whoever decides to come forward.  
  
Ojukwu, in a parley with reporters in Abuja, said speaking up would deter abusers as their greatest instrument has always been the cover-up of such action.  
  
He said when victims do not come forward they encourage perpetuators to continue with their vile actions in society.  
  
He said the media is important in the fight against rape and other sexual and gender based violence as information is key.  
  
“Through media enlightenment, people would have information that would help in fighting rape. Knowledge is power, we must tell people the right thing to do and the right time to do it,” he said.  
  
The Executive Secretary urged the media highlight the inadequacy of funding to the Commission and the need for government to provide specific budget item for rape and and sexual and gender based violations.  
  
He also stressed the need for government and corporate organizations to contribute to the Human Rights fund to galvanize human rights promotion and protection.  
  
He said, “Even if one complains about rape 10 years later, the person should not be condemned. Because you report it 10 years later does not mean it did not happen. A crime remains alive for life. There is no time of expiration for crime. What happens is that if you report late it only makes it more difficult to prove.  
  
“We are encouraging rape victims to speak up. The fact that you can speak up is a discouraging factor for rapists because one of the greatest instruments they have is the cover up. Anyone who has been raped no matter how many years have passed should say so, even if it is up to 50 years. Perpetuators must account for their actions.  
  
“If you know that if you do something today, you might be called to account for it in the next 10 or 15 years, that would send some signal to you, that it is no longer business as usual. It would no longer be business as usual. If you think because nobody has mentioned it and years have gone already, you are wrong.  
  
“The sensitization we are doing now is to make people wake up from their slumber to empower them to live out of this stigmatization. Anybody who has gone through this experience would not wish anyone to pass through this and by coming to speak out, you are helping out.  
  
“This because every abuser that you are not exposing, you are creating opportunity for more people to be abused. I don’t think that as a victim, you will want a situation where by your action, you encourage people to abuse others. We are calling on people to speak out. We are not encouraging blackmail because the law has provision for that. We want people to say the right thing and when you do the right thing we would support you and see you through. All of us must support this process. We need to restore the dignity of women in this country. We would not rest until this is achieved,” he said.  
  
Ojukwu said the media in Nigeria has continued to play a tremendous role is assisting the Commission accomplish its statutory mandate of promoting and protecting as well as the enforcement of human rights since its establishment.