‘No man with conscience keeps mute against rape’

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From Tony Akowe, Abuja, Toba Adedeji, Osogbo, Yinka Adeniran, Ibadan, Ernest Nwokolo, Abeokuta and Oziegbe Okoeki  
  
Protests in Lagos, Osun, Oyo against rape, sexual violence  
  
Gbajabiamila, ASUU, NANS seek action against rapists  
  
There were protests on Thursday in Lagos, Osun and Oyo states to draw attention to rising cases of rape and other sexual offences as well as violence against women and girls.  
  
In Lagos, a group of all-men protesters said they could no longer keep quiet while innocent women and girls were being violated.  
  
They stressed that no man with clean conscience would be at peace when women and girls are abused by fellow men.  
  
The protesters were at Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu’s office in Ikeja to pledge their support for laws that will end violence against the female folks.  
  
The march was organised by Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) in collaboration with Partnership for Justice and Mirabel.  
  
Speaking on behalf of the protesters, Chico Aligwekwe said: “Every incident of rape questions our definition of masculinity and threatens the very essence of our humanity as men. So, the rape of one woman or girl should give every man something to worry about. It is a bereavement that we should all mourn collectively because of what truly dies in the woman.  
  
“The silence of good men may be a convenient stand, but it empowers the rapist, condemns and dehumanises the victims and further deepens a rape culture. So, we call on every good man in this country to rise up and speak out against rape. We call on every man, anywhere in this country, to take responsibility for creating a society that is safe for all women and girls.”  
  
Receiving the protesters, the governor’s wife, Dr. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, said: “It is laudable to see men come out to send strong message against rape and ending sexual and gender-based violence in Lagos State. I am very happy that we are able to do this, and I hope this will not be the last time we are going to see men coming out like this.  
  
“…A lot is required to defeat this monster. We are prepared to do what it takes to end rape and all form of sexual and gender-based violence against women and children in our dear state and, by extension, in Nigeria,” she said.  
  
In Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, a leading global organisation of professionals, Zonta International, sought men’s partnership to end violence against women and girls.  
  
Zonta Club I President, Mrs Olajumoke Akere, described the recent killings of many victims of domestic and sexual violence across the country as very sad.  
  
President of Zonta Club II Ibadan, Mrs Stella Olaniyan, highlighted the trauma that victims of sexual violence pass through.  
  
They urged law enforcement agencies to investigate and arrest perpetrators to serve as deterrent to potential offenders.  
  
In Osogbo, the Osun State capital, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Global Girls Network, protested alleged settlement of rape cases by community leaders in Osun State.  
  
Members of the NGO converged on Salvation Army Middle School at Alekuwodo in the town around 9 a.m and marched to the popular Ola-Iya Junction.  
  
One of the leaders of the protesters, Ms Ibikunle Itunuoluwa, said: “We want the state government to take action against rape as we want our community leaders too when issues of rape are reported to them. They should not settle it but bring out the perpetrators. To end rape, it requires a collective effort.”  
  
House of Representatives Speaker Femi Gbajabiamila on Thursday called for a state of emergency to stop assaults against women and children.  
  
He said such a move would mobilise government resources to end sexual and gender-based violence in the country.  
  
Also, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) on Thursday urged the Federal Government to impose life imprisonment on convicted rapists.  
  
Its Chairman at the Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology (OAUSTECH), Okitipupa, Ondo State, Dr Dipo Akomolafe, said such punishment would curb the criminal act in the country.  
  
Akomolafe told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that rape cases were rising because government was not enforcing the Criminal Code, which recommends life imprisonment for convicted rapists and 14 years for attempted rape.  
  
The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) on Thursday urged the President’s wife, Hajia Aisha Muhammadu Buhari, to mobilise governors’ wives and women lawmakers across the country for a law that will impose capital punishment on rape offenders.  
  
Its Public Relation Officer, Azeez Adeyemi, who spoke in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, while addressing reporters ahead of today’s June 12 and Democracy Day celebration, said: “…We hereby call for immediate and thorough investigation of rape cases to determine the actual cause of its recent upsurge across the country where most of the victims were murdered.  
  
“We call on our security agencies to be up and doing to unravel those behind these inhuman acts and bring them to book to serve as deterrent to others. Nigerians are restless to know those behind this wickedness.”