The Nation Newspaper

Date: 2017-09-07

Source: https://thenationonlineng.net/against-rape/

Against rape  
  
•The laws have to be more stringent and enforceable  
  
News that over 1,000 women were raped in Kwara State in 2016 is jolting, and calls for greater social efforts to combat rape. Quoting statistics supplied by the Kwara State Ministry of Women Affairs, the founder, Saab Foundation, Sa’adat Bibire, observed that the figure indicated that the crime had escalated in the state and required urgent attention.  
  
Bibire highlighted the need for action against rape and other crimes against women during the foundation’s campaign in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital. The campaign, tagged ‘Walkathon against rape,’ involved a march around the city by the organisation’s members and supporters who carried placards to raise awareness of gender-based violence, particularly rape.  
  
The exercise was a commendable social service, and helped to draw attention to a serious social problem. Bibire captured the reality and extent of the problem: “Rape could be spiritual or psychological. Rapists are either animals or devils. Rape victims should speak up. They should stop blaming or hating themselves throughout their lives and they should not end up committing suicide. It is not their fault.” She also projected the group’s role: “We are creating awareness for gender-based violence. We are working to make people know that these things are real. People are not just cooking up stories on the internet. These things happen. We are having this ‘walkathon’ to make them know that if it happens to them, God forbid; we will take the case up for them.”  
  
There must be reasons for rape and its escalation, but there can be no reason for its accommodation. Though national statistics on rape are unavailable, there is no question that, going by the reported cases, it is a crime that is unfortunately on the increase nationwide. Indeed, it may be said that the problem is very close to crisis point, considering recent reports of cases where the victims were children and the elderly.  
  
Rape is described as “a severely under-reported crime.” Also, it has been observed that “Inconsistent definitions of rape, different rates of reporting, recording, prosecution and conviction for rape create controversial statistical disparities, and lead to accusations that many rape statistics are unreliable or misleading.”  
  
However, there is no denying that in Nigeria the rape rate has become alarmingly high. This explains Bibire’s appeal to the authorities to do something about it. She was quoted as saying: “I am calling on the National Assembly and the 36 houses of assembly to make laws against rape and other domestic violence stricter and more enforceable. They need to do something. They are representing us and they need to stand for us. It could be their sisters, friends and mothers.”  
  
Her suggestions are useful and deserve consideration: “There is a lot government can do. They can start by reviewing the laws. There are laws against rape but they are rigid. They are actually favouring the rapists, because you have a law saying that there has to be a witness during the penetration. How is that possible?” She added: “A rapist is smart enough to make sure that nobody will be there when he is going to do the evil act. So, how can you have somebody that will witness the penetration? That is favouring the rapist. They need to amend the laws to favour the unfortunate victims.”  
  
There is no doubt that rape is a subject for sociological enquiry. Its magnitude is a sad reflection of a collapse of values. It would appear that time-honoured morality is the ultimate victim.  
  
But the matter is too grave to be left to philosophising. Tackling it requires practical action, particularly in the areas of restraining laws and enforcement institutions. Ultimately, rape is a crime that should be punished with severity to underline its unacceptability.