Director of child welfare nabbed over sexual harassment in Kogi

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James Azania, Lokoja  
  
The Director of Child Welfare at the Kogi State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Mr. Omoyele Fatoye, is now facing police interrogation for alleged sexual harassment.  
  
His alleged victim is 25 year old Blessing, older sister of a day old baby who was abandoned by her mother two weeks ago in Lokoja.  
  
The police said yesterday that the suspect was ‘caught in the act’ on Thursday Lokongoma area of Lokoja following a distress call by Blessing.  
  
Speaking to reporters on the incident Friday, the Police Officer in charge of ‘D’ Division ,Lokoja, Mr. Ishaya Pam, said he and his team raced to the scene and found Blessing without her blouse which had been allegedly removed by the director and hung in his wardrobe.  
  
His words: “I missed a call (unknown number to my phone). As DPO, I have to return missed calls.  
  
“I called back and the person introduced herself as Blessing, a daughter of the mother of the abandoned child; that she was in distress, and in a house near Pati Guest Inn, here in Lokongoma, which is under my area of jurisdiction (AOR).  
  
“Thereafter, I went there with two of my detectives around 2145 hours (9.45pm). I saw Fatoye, the director and the girl, and we brought them to the station.  
  
“We are investigating him on attempt to commit an offence and gross indecent assault, after which he will be charged to court.”  
  
Blessing, a wrestler, who was part of the Kogi State contingent to last year’s National Youth Games in Ilorin, Kwara State, said that the director collected her contact number the day after her mother was arrested.  
  
She said: “On the day they arrested my mother, when I got to state CID, I found out that they were going to the ministry of women affairs, and I went with her.  
  
“It was there I saw him (director). He said that he needed my contact; if I wanted to see the child, that I’ll see him through him. I gave him my contact number.  
  
“They asked what I had to say about my mom, and I said after everything she’s going to the village (in Jos). The woman (commissioner) said that she was angry with my mom, and that the child is not hers; that any child you turn your back on, is no longer yours. That the baby belongs to the government. And, we left.  
  
“When we got to where we were to sign, my mother said that she was not signing. The man said that if she liked the baby, why she didn’t stay to look after her.  
  
“I called my auntie in Jos to speak with him, but he said that nobody was talking to anybody on phone; that he didn’t want to listen to anybody on the phone. He now brought out ink pad for thumbprint, saying if she did not append, she’ll not leave there. He had to force my mom to thumbprint, after which he said I should sign.  
  
“He threatened that the whole blame for whatever happened would be on me. I had to sign the paper. He said that I should take my mother to anywhere I wanted.  
  
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“I traveled on the time they found the baby, and when I came back, I met all this on ground. My mother pleaded with me to forgive her; that she did not know why she did that, that she was afraid. And, I forgave her.  
  
“He (director) was calling me, saying he wanted to see me that anywhere I was, I should come over. That time, I was so angry. I told him I’ll get back to him, but I did not. “He kept calling. Yesterday (Thursday) he called me and I said I was at home, and he said that I should meet him at Pati Guest Inn, and when I got there he took me to his house, which is not far from there. I was scared.  
  
“When I got there, he now started touching me; rubbing my breasts. I now asked him how much he was going to give me. He then pulled my blouse and hung it in the wardrobe. I imagined myself. I asked, what is his problem?  
  
“He now told me that anytime I wanted to see the baby, I could come through him; that he was going to give me N2, 000 next week; that he didn’t want to take me like a prostitute, but only wanted to keep me for himself anytime he wanted me.  
  
“I wanted to go but he ordered that I should till the next day. I now said well…  
  
“After then, I called the DPO. He called back, but he said I should call the next day, and I now said that I was in trouble. After that, he asked of my location and I described the place to him.”  
  
A dejected Fatoye prostrated over and over yesterday to the DPO as he was usher into Pam’s.  
  
He pleaded for forgiveness.  
  
He was detained overnight.  
  
Meanwhile, the State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs Bolanle Amupitan, who was unaware of Fatoye’s arrest, had sent for him at work and was worried that he was unusually late to arrive office.  
  
Blessing’s mother, Mary James, allegedly abandoned her day old baby two weeks ago at a refuse dump in Otokiti area of the city.  
  
Residents of the community who found the baby alerted the ministry about the development following which the baby was rescued and taken to the State Specialist Hospital for medical attention.  
  
The residents teamed up with government officials to trace Mary.  
  
They later handed her over to the police for investigation.  
  
Mary was later allegedly forced to sign an undertaking that the baby was not hers.  
  
A week later, the residents raised the alarm that the baby had been stolen from the hospital.  
  
Women Affairs and Social Development Commissioner Amupitan later confirmed that the baby girl was in their care.  
  
She told The Nation Friday on phone that she knew nothing about Fatoye’s arrest by the police.  
  
A resident of Otokiti, Ayodeji Ubeida, said they were dismayed when they learnt of the baby’s disappearance from the hospital.  
  
He said: “The baby was handed over on that day, and the mother who dumped it even breastfed it at the station, but to our utter dismay, we learnt that the child in the hospital had disappeared into thin air, while the mother is still in the police custody.  
  
“This sudden disappearance of the child is a concern to the community. The ministry of women affairs and social development should speak out.”  
  
The Chief Medical Director (CMD of the Kogi State Specialist Hospital (KSSH), Dr Ahmed Attach, dismissed the allegation that the baby disappeared from the hospital.  
  
He explained that the baby was brought to the hospital by the state ministry of women affairs for medical attention because the baby was having umbilical infections.  
  
He said: ”The baby in question was brought to our hospital on Tuesday October 8, for proper care and assessment and to ensure that she does not have any health challenge. We gave her utmost attention wholeheartedly, and while in our custody, we saved the baby, took care of her and was treated to ensure that she did not suffer any health challenge.  
  
”The baby was eventually discharged on Friday of that same week after full post-natal care was given to her.  
  
”We are worried by the purported news of the baby’s disappearance; it is a negative propaganda to paint the hospital in a bad light, which is totally and absolutely false.”  
  
Mrs. Amupitan had earlier said Mary, a widow and mother of three, would be prosecuted after investigation by the police.  
  
Recalling the incident, she said: “We were on our way to Okura sawmill to commission a project (orphanage/destitute home), when we received a call about an abandoned baby, and that they were taking it to the FMC (Federal Medical Center), and I said No, take it to the Specialist Hospital.  
  
“When we returned with the permanent secretary and the woman that found the baby, I told her, let us go to the police station. She was scared, but at the end, we went to make an official report.  
  
“They were removing maggots from the baby’s ears. It is our responsibility.  
  
“It is our responsibility to take care of such abandoned babies. We have the mandate to pick abandoned babies, take care of them and if need be, give them out for adoption.  
  
“They called us that the baby was ready for discharge, and I sent my Director, Child Development there. The baby is in the orphanage under our care. We are going to prosecute the woman. We have the Child Rights law that is domesticated in Kogi. The police will investigate and report back to us. We took the baby there. We have expanded over N100, 000 on her care; we bought dresses, clothing and other necessary things for the baby while she was in the hospital.  
  
Mr. Suleiman Abdullahi, the Permanent Secretary in the ministry also confirmed to our reporter that the baby was hale and hearty in their custody.