14-year-old rape victim contracts HIV, culprit bags life jail

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A 14-year-old rape victim (name withheld) has contracted the Human Immunodeficiency Virus after she was defiled by a man, identified as Richard Saviour.  
  
According to the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, the culprit was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Lagos High Court, Ikeja, for defiling the victim, who is a niece to his wife.  
  
The judgment was delivered by Justice Oyindamola Ogala on Tuesday.  
  
“The judge said when the police took the victim to the Mirabel Centre, she was tested and found to be HIV positive.  
  
Thereafter, she was transferred to Mary’s Home Orphanage and looked after with the help of Positive Action for Treatment Access, a Non-Governmental Organisation.  
  
“The judge, hence, convicted the defendant on the charge of defilement by unlawful sexual assault and sentenced him to life imprisonment in the correctional centre,” the statement published Wednesday on the agency’s X handle, @Lagosdsva, read.  
  
The agency noted that the State Counsel, Ola Azeez, called three witnesses to prove the prosecution’s case while the convict testified in his defence during the trial.  
  
In her ruling, the judge held that the evidence provided by all the prosecution witnesses was corroborated and considered as the truth.  
  
Justice Ogala said the victim’s evidence was corroborated by the Investigating Police Officer and Social Worker from the state Ministry of Youth and Social Welfare.  
  
According to her, these established the offence of defilement against the convict.  
  
The judge said, “The testimony before the court depicts the ‘evil’ perpetrated on this young girl and how she was abused both mentally and physically by the defendant and his wife for years.  
  
“Revealing how she indeed ‘cried out’ for help and was betrayed by those who were supposed to help and support her.  
  
“It is imperative to state at this juncture that the actions of the principal of PW2’s school and the social worker (PW3) are commendable as same eventually brought some succour and relief to PW2, who unfortunately has been permanently ‘scared’  
  
“Having carefully considered the entirety of facts before the court, it finds that in this instance, the prosecution has satisfactorily proved the one count information the defendant stands faced with.”  
  
Ogala said the mien of the defendant was desperate to distance himself from the allegation by denying the offences.  
  
“The defendant in his evidence before the court indeed narrated how PW2 (the survivor) had at one instance, after running from home to avoid a beating from his wife, ran to the station and he was subsequently informed that PW2 accused him of molesting her.  
  
“The court finds that the totality of the testimony of the defendant who testified in his defence calling no additional witness is in essence a denial of the allegation without more.  
  
“He offered no reliable explanations to the charge aside from attempts to depict PW2 as a stubborn girl and one who stole from himself and his wife,” she added.  
  
Reacting to the judgment of the court, the Head of the Gender Department, Take It Back Movement, Omolola Pedro, said getting such justice for victims of sexual violence in Nigeria was a reflection of hard work and intentionality.  
  
“The survivor should be provided with adequate support, care, and treatment at this time when she needs it the most. When perpetrators know that the hands of the law can catch up on them, they’d realise that they’re not untouchable.  
  
“Nigeria has enough laws, acts, and policies to protect the rights of women and girls. What we lack is implementation and this is a result of the lack of intentionality on the part of those who are supposed to be in a position to help victims and survivors,” she told PUNCH Metro in an interview on Wednesday.  
  
PUNCH Metro reports that the Special Offences and Domestic Violence Court, Ikeja, had on Tuesday, also convicted a man, Ndedigwe Paul, to double life imprisonment for sexual assault of minors, following a comprehensive trial that sought justice for the victims.  
  
The convict was handed down the sentence by Justice Abiola Soladoye on January 30, 2024, who, after a careful consideration of the evidence presented, found the defendant guilty on two out of the three-count charges of defilement and unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor contravening Section 137 of the Criminal Laws of Lagos State 2015.