52-year-old Abuja bishop bags 20-year jail for raping minor

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A Federal Capital Territory High Court has sentenced a prominent Abuja-based clergyman, Bishop Kenneth Duke, to 20 years behind bars without an option of fine for rape.  
  
The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons revealed this in a statement on Wednesday by its National Press Officer, Vincent Adekoye, titled, ‘An FCT High Court sentenced a 52-year-old bishop to 20 years imprisonment for rape.’  
  
NAPTIP had sued the 52-year-old, who hails from Cross River State, for raping a 12-year-old girl (name withheld).  
  
Adekoye said the victim is the daughter of the bishop’s church member “who was entrusted under the care of his family.”  
  
In case no: CR/702/2023 Federal Republic of Nigeria Vs Bishop Kenneth Duke, the Defendant was arraigned before Court 16 on 02/11/2023 on two counts for the offence of rape and intentionally caused emotional and psychological abuse on the victim.  
  
The offence stated that the convict, who lives behind Dantata Construction Company, Dakwa, Abuja, on March 6, 2023, had carnal knowledge of the victim without consent, committing an offence punishable under the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015.  
  
NAPTIP said its investigation revealed that the victim, an indigene of Ondo State, was living in Lagos before she was brought to Abuja to live with her mother.  
  
The report indicated that on March 5, 2023, “her mother took her to the church located at Dantata Zuba Expressway, and after the service, she was taken to the family house of the bishop, who is also the pastor of the church, so that she could stay with them to enable the bishop’s wife to take her to where she would learn a skill which both families had earlier discussed.  
  
“It was gathered that the following day, March 6, 2023, the convict, father of five children, sent his children on an errand, and being alone with the victim at home at about 10:00 a.m., gave her some mathematics work to solve and as she was trying to do it, the bishop pounced on her, covered her mouth and violently raped her on a chair despite her crying and pleading,” NAPTIP said.  
  
In the judgment by Justice Adebiyi Osolo, the clergy was found guilty of one count of rape and was sentenced accordingly without an option of a fine.  
  
The development came on the heels of the rescue of nine pregnant girls by NAPTIP operatives at a suspected baby factory located inside one of the sprawling estates in the Ushafa area of Abuja.  
  
The victims were confined to a rented apartment inside the estate by a yet-to-be-identified suspected trafficking agent after recruiting them through an online platform.  
  
NAPTIP’s raid on the facility followed a tip-off by a concerned citizen who noticed the unusual situation and movement around the area.  
  
Speaking on the conviction, the agency’s Director General, Binta Bello, expressed gratitude to the judiciary for the landmark judgment, saying that it would serve as a deterrent to others.  
  
“I want to thank the judiciary for this judgment. It will certainly serve as a deterrent to other people. As I warned a few weeks ago, NAPTIP will not spare anyone found to have violated any of the laws irrespective of status, either on human trafficking or violence against persons.  
  
“Rape is a serious crime with everlasting psychological effect and lasting trauma on the victim. We must all rise to say no to this heinous crime and ensure the protection of our children.  
  
“How can you imagine a 52-year-old man violating a 12-year-old girl? It is painful, and it is criminal. I am relieved that the judiciary has served the convict the commensurable punishment for his action. This is a warning to others,” the DG stated.