Nigerians proffer solutions to rape endemic

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Dr. Princess Olufemi-Kayode (Child protection consultant)  
  
We need to find a way to stop people from committing rape. It is not everybody that is involved in it that is a serial rapist. We need to do a proper research. We have scholars who are not doing anything.  
  
They need to do something that will help us to find a solution. We need facts and data to help us to determine what will work for us.  
  
If we say rapists should be castrated, how many people are we going to castrate? If we say they should be given a life jail term, how many people are we going to send to prisons? Many of the suspects could be helped.  
  
Today, children also rape. Should we also castrate minors or send them to jail?  
  
We need to study the trend to determine the appropriate punishment. Germany has adopted castration; but most of the times, it is applied to only serial rapists. There are a lot of things we still do not know about those who commit the offence. That is why we need to do more research on the issue.  
  
Juliana Iregbu (Programme Officer, Centre for Constitutional Governance)  
  
It is unfortunate that rape, despite the recent increase in the campaign against it, has been on the rise. So far, I think the Lagos State Government has done the appropriate thing. It has passed a law that recommends a life imprisonment for anybody convicted of rape. If that could be replicated at the national level and implemented it would serve as a deterrent.  
  
There was a time in Lagos State when people convicted of defiling minors were fined N1000. The punishment is now life imprisonment.  
  
The Federal Government should copy the state law if it sincerely wants to stop rape. It is not just about making a law; we also need to step up the enforcement.  
  
Adeosun Topegreat (Convener, Youth Avail Network)  
  
I think the relevant agencies need to encourage victims of rape to report cases of abuse. They should also make it easier for them to report cases.  
  
As regards punishment, rape should be a non-bailable crime. It is not enough to make the punishment severe, the laws should be enforced.  
  
What stops people from committing a crime is not the law but the effectiveness of the justice system.  
  
I know that nobody in Nigeria would want to be imprisoned for two years for a rape offence. If the jail term is five years, it should be enforced.  
  
If we make the offence a capital punishment but there is weak enforcement, it will not make any difference.  
  
Gabriel Emameh (Abuja-based communication consultant)  
  
According to statistics, only two per cent of rape cases in Nigeria receive judicial intervention. This means that 98 per cent of rapists go free.  
  
Over the years, the government has failed to put stringent laws in place to prevent the crime.  
  
The judiciary has not also helped. When you have a system that allows rape suspects to go without punishment, there is the likelihood that others who commit the act will not see anything wrong with it.  
  
Government, at all levels, should come up with enforceable laws to protect vulnerable individuals against rapists. Life jail should be the least punishment a convict should get.  
  
Kunle Adegunoye (Teacher)  
  
Rape, in the real sense of it, is not a sexual pleasure; it is aimed at torturing and humiliating the vulnerable, especially young people. Rapists find it comfortable to cohabit with the people because the society tolerates them and the laws are weak.  
  
We must establish the fact that there is no shame in being a victim of sexual violence. The world must know that the real person who should be ashamed is the rapist. We should assist the law enforcement agencies in the prosecution of rape. People are not often willing to give witness at law court. That is not helping the matter. As a country, we must do away with the myth that rape is not preventable. We can end it if we believe we can.  
  
Ruth Mofoluwasho (Alumna of University of Nigeria, Nsukka)  
  
Rape should be treated based on the circumstances surrounding a specific case. For instance, if the victim, in the case of a lady, is a mature individual and dresses provocatively when the incident occurs, the man should be given a light punishment. In that case, it should be presumed that the lady seduced the man; but where the victim is a minor or an elderly person, the convict should be castrated.  
  
When we apply the laws differently, ladies who dress ‘to kill’ would learn to cover their bodies. It will be unfair to say the same punishment should be meted out to a man who is seduced to commit the offence and another person whose action shows that he is a serial rapist.  
  
Chukwuka Ozor (An employee)  
  
In my opinion, there is no punishment that would serve as a deterrent to rapists. We should study the system and come up with a recommendation for an appropriate law.  
  
Rape has enormous psychological and emotional effect on the victim and, people found guilty should be made to undergo anti-rape counselling and spend minimum of 15 years behind bars.  
  
Minors who are convicted of rape should be sent to reformation centres.  
  
They should only be released after they are medically and psychologically certified. This is the practice in different parts of the world and Nigeria should not be different.  
  
Adebayo Obatungashe (Entrepreneur)  
  
We need to look at rape from the perspective of what causes it. There are several factors that are responsible for the satanic act. These include illiteracy, alcohol and drug usage, poverty, youthful exuberance and ignorance. Rape, in many cases, inflicts permanent disability and trauma on the victims. It can also lead to untimely death.  
  
To end the ugly trend, we must understand and detect signs that an individual could be a rapist. Special attention should be paid to children and teenagers. There must be a national strategy to promote respect for human rights. Also, the law enforcement agents should be educated and empowered to handle rape cases.  
  
Ottun Opeyemi (Lagos resident)  
  
To me, rape is synonymous with murder. If anybody would take away another person’s dignity by force, such a person would kill. So, life jail term should not be too much for punishment for rape.  
  
I suggest that relevant laws be amended to make rape a capital offence. The laws should be enforced so that likely offenders would be deterred by the weight of punishment that awaits them if they go ahead to commit the offence.  
  
Except we do this, the problem will continue. When people know that they will go free if they commit a crime, they will continue to break the laws.  
  
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