What punishment is adequate to deter rapists in Nigeria today?

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Reports of minors and others, especially women being raped are common in Nigeria and there have been talks about how society can deal with the problem. Saturday PUNCH asked a cross-section of Nigerians to state what they think is the right punishment to deter rapists in the country. Here are their responses:  
  
Public execution – Prof Oni Fagbohungbe  
  
Nigeria is a peculiar place, we have laws against armed robbery and other criminal acts; a drastic situation requires a drastic solution. We need a highly deterrent law to curtail the act of rape; if not, it would continue and become a culture. Once it becomes a culture, nobody will be able to stop it. Rapists should be executed; it is likely to serve as a deterrent. I recommend public execution for them. It should be implemented; there shouldn’t be a sacred cow.  
  
Seven years’ imprisonment – Adeyemi Omisore  
  
Rape is an evil act exhibited by an insane and callous individual. What kind of person forces a member of the opposite sex to have sex with them without their consent? If anyone is found culpable, such an individual should be subjected to a psychological test with rehabilitation. Such an individual should also be sent to jail for seven years with hard labour.  
  
Rape is barbaric – Odususi Victor  
  
In recent times, rape incidents have been on the rise in Nigeria. According to statistics, one in every four girls would have experienced at least one form of sexual assault or the other by the time she is 18 years old. This rate is alarming, which makes rape an epidemic in Nigeria. However, the country’s laws are not helping at all and it is important to note that most perpetrators go unpunished. I read an article about a state in Nigeria where the punishment for rape is either one year’s imprisonment or an option of N2,000 fine; this is terrible. In view of this, there is a need to toughen the punishment for rape in Nigeria. I will like to mention that no punishment is enough to fully deter rapists in Nigeria, but personally, I will suggest 20 to 30 years’ imprisonment for rapists in Nigeria. Rape is barbaric and inhumane; it causes physical, mental and emotional damage to the victim. It is a terrible crime that should not be condoned.  
  
Rape is a serious offence – Suleiman Abdullahi  
  
Rape is a very serious offence which is rampant in the country at the moment. In most cases, women are victims of rape. For us to curb rape, capital punishment has to be meted out. It’s like the punishment for rape is not as serious as it should be. In my opinion, rape should either attract a life sentence or the death penalty. This would reduce the level at which people indulge in such. But as we all know, here in Nigeria, it is easy to make a law but it is very difficult to execute it as many offenders go scot-free.  
  
Some men see women as slaves – Aripade Godspower  
  
Death penalty should be passed on any rapist if found guilty. This is because some men see women as slaves that are supposed to be at their mercy. Some men take advantage of women when they come to them for help or when they have to live under their roof, maybe when they are stranded and in need of a place to spend the night.  
  
The problem is with getting convictions – Chidera Okolie  
  
While it may seem that the severity of the punishment to be meted to rapists will deter them and prevent further acts of sexual violence against women, the foremost problem lies in the low rate of convictions for crimes against women. Simply put, a criminal who understands that the punishment for a particular offence is death sentence will go ahead and commit this crime if he, in the course of his research, has realised that there has been a poor rate of convictions for the said crime. The possibility of getting away with the crime is all the push he needs and this completely undermines the deterrent effect of whatever penalty has been put in place. This is the case, even in our homes. In those days when our parents caught us doing something wrong and told us that we would be punished, this would make us weep even before we knew what the punishment was.  
  
This is not in any way taking away the fact that the severity of the punishment plays a huge role in the deterrent theory. I would personally advise that the sentence of life imprisonment without parole should be meted out to sex offenders because of the possibility of reformation while it would also serve as a deterrent to rapists and those conceiving such thoughts.  
  
However, this only holds water where there is a conviction. It is my opinion that rape culture will continue to be the order of the day even if the criminal and penal code provide the harshest punishments for sex offenders and there is no focus on taking these cases seriously enough to secure convictions instead of treating them with laxity.  
  
Rape should be taken seriously- Amina Orefi Usman  
  
Rape is something that should be taken seriously and handled with care at the same time. I feel no one should go through such trauma. The best punishment for a rapist should be life imprisonment if found guilty. I choose this option because it’s something that can be undone anytime; many people will go for a death sentence or chemical castration but for me, it shouldn’t be the case. Inasmuch as most rape cases go through different stages, a person might be convicted wrongly. They could even be set up for one or two reasons. Life in prison will be a good punishment for rapists so they don’t have access to other people to prevent future occurrence.  
  
Minimum of 35 years’ imprisonment  
  
Mukosolu Chukwuka  
  
I believe that rapists in Nigeria are confident that rape victims would not report the act because of the stigma, or that the delays in the justice system would work in their favour. For these reasons, I feel that the punishment for rape isn’t as important as instilling fear of repercussions in rapists. So to deter rapists, victims should be encouraged to report rape cases and be assured that their identities would be kept confidential.  
  
A special government agency may be set up to investigate and prosecute offenders of rape, sexual assault, etc. During the investigation, the accused person ought to be held in custody, especially where there is sufficient evidence to prosecute.  
  
Hearing of all rape cases should be accelerated and heard in a special court. Rape cases should be publicised to expose the accused persons, but the victims’ identities should be kept confidential. Upon conviction, a minimum of 35-year sentence with hard labour and no chance of parole should be imposed. Knowing that their identities would be exposed and that they risk public embarrassment would serve to deter intending rapists.  
  
Death penalty is adequate – Stephine Favour  
  
To me, a rapist should be given the death penalty when caught red-handed because these days, rapists are going after children. I saw a story on social media this week about a man who raped a six-year-old girl; that type of person should be given the death penalty.  
  
In a situation where the victim comes up one morning to talk about being raped by someone some years ago, the law should be allowed to take its course. For example, a woman recently alleged that a pastor raped her some years back but we were not there and there is no evidence.  
  
I am not supporting anybody, but they should take the matter to court. If he is found guilty, he should receive his punishment.  
  
Isolation in jail – Oluwagbemisola Famubode Ogunle  
  
I don’t think the current punishment for rape is serving as a deterrent for rapists. I strongly recommend more punitive measures such as isolation in jail throughout their term. This will make them also feel the same isolation their victims face.  
  
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