Why is there so much rape in Nigeria?

Date: 2016-08-09

Source: https://punchng.com/much-rape-nigeria/

Rape is a conscious process of intimidation wherein perpetrators keep women and children especially, in a state of constant fear. Rape devalues the victim. It is a crime which stigmatises the emotions, a crime of insult, oppression and revenge that needs to be punished because a rapist is a criminal and all crimes and their beneficiaries must be punished. Rape and other forms of sexual harassment need the urgent and serious attention of family, institutions, civil society groups, government and the international community if we really want to ensure a violence-free society for all.  
  
Cases of sexual violence have increased all over the world. The Stanford rape case involving a 20-year-old former Stanford University student who was sent to jail for sexually assaulting an unconscious woman on the school campus is a case in point. The judgment generated a lot of negative responses on social media and from the public against the Judge mostly because the sentence – a mere six months and three years probation – seemed like a slap on the wrist for the rapist.  
  
In Nigeria as well, there has been an increasing number of rape and sexual harassment cases on a keen keel. A total number of 150 reported cases of sexual and physical abuse were recorded in Lagos State for one year period as of April 27, 2016. Also, the Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs. Lola Akande, said the ministry in the last one year had treated about 589 cases ranging from sexual abuse, physical abuse and child labour.  
  
If nobody is alarmed at the frequency of these occurrences, we are. They seem to have grown in frequency maybe because our institutions are not addressing these crimes by dealing with the perpetrators. There was a case of a 44-year-old man from Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State who was alleged to have defiled his daughter and actually confessed to have had sexual intercourse with her several times. What then can we make of the man in Enugu who raped three of his children aged five, seven and nine and another 10-year-old girl who cried out after constant defilement by her father for a period of 18 months in Lagos? What can we say about that?  
  
In a survey we have carried out on rape in Nigerian universities, we discovered that in one of the top federal universities, 100 per cent of rape/sexually harassed victims are female students. Of that number, 67 per cent did nothing after they were raped while 33 per cent made some kind of feeble report of being raped to friends, a course adviser and others made reports to their parents or guardians. Nearly 88 per cent of respondents have heard of sexual harassment with 66 per cent being aware of more than two cases of rape. Of that number, 99 per cent of the students agreed that there should be a centre where incidences of rape are reported.  
  
If that number of students in our tertiary institutions would decide to keep quiet after they have been raped by lecturers and fellow students, it means that we have one hell of a problem on our hands. Keeping quiet after being raped may just be one very good reason why the crime is on the rise in Nigeria. We found out as well that most people keep quiet because they do not have confidence in the institutions that should champion their cause. This lack of confidence can make students and the larger society begin to resort to self-help in the resolution of incidences of rape and sexual molestation in all strata of our lives.  
  
We also use this opportunity to call on the judiciary to intensify efforts in removing the delay in prosecuting rape, being fully aware that rape cases is hard to prove. We believe that the law must no longer be lenient with rapists and perpetrators at all levels in the community so as to deter perpetrators in the society.  
  
Copyright PUNCH.  
  
All rights reserved. This material, and other digital content on this website, may not be reproduced, published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed in whole or in part without prior express written permission from PUNCH.  
  
Contact: [email protected]