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Woman sexually assaulted by Lagos mob speaks ...'My horror'

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By Olasunkanmi Akoni

Lagos State residents were unsettled in December following human rights abuse allegedly committed against two women sexually assaulted in Ejigbo area over alleged stealing of pepper.

The incident became public when the footage was posted on the social media in which the two women were shown being stripped naked by a group of young men and, after being battered, the assailants administered pepper in their private parts.

They were alleged to have gone to a pepper shop at the Central Market, Iyana Ejigbo in the night and stole pepper before they were caught by a group of vigilante who descended on them.

Irrked by the incident, President of Women Arise for Change Initiative, Dr. Joel Odumakin, on December 23, 2013, led a protest to the Lagos State House of Assembly and submitted a petition on the need for the lawmakers to intervene and ensure justice was done to the perpetrators.

“We are hopeful that with the help of the Lagos State House of Assembly that has taken up the gauntlet, reprieve is imminent, and that this processing will not be consigned to the trashcan of unsolved abuses, and, hopefully, this will spur other state governments and indeed the government at the centre to act with conciseness and purpose for the Nigerian people,” Odumakin said.

She also informed the meeting that the youngest of the women was unconfirmed dead and the father relocated to another area of Ejigbo.

Deterrent

Odumakin insisted that she wanted “this matter to serve as a deterrent to others so that anywhere those women are, they can be rest assured that some people stood for their justice, because justice delayed is justice denied; let us do the needful”.

She pleaded for permission to show the video in the hall, and said that she saw the video for the first time on December

7, 2013.

The eight-minute video clip moved the participants to tears.

Odumakin stated that the greatest gift anyone could give the women was to get justice for them.

The spokesperson for the police, the DPO in charge of Iyana Ejigbo, Mr. Inoma –Abbey, claimed that the matter came to his notice on December 1, 2013 through a friend and urged the public with any useful information that could lead to the arrest of the culprits to contact the police.

Lagos State House of Assembly later set up a five-man Ad-hoc Committee, headed by Hon. Ajibayo Adeyeye, to investigate the matter and report back to the House with a view to resolving it and bringing the perpetrators to book. Subsequently, the committee, last Wednesday, held a stakeholders' meeting, comprising of representatives of Women Arise for Change Initiative, led by Odumakin herself, the police, Community Development Committee, CDC, Ejigbo branch, representatives of Ejigbo Local Council Development Area, LCDA, market leaders in Ejigbo, amongst others.

Also present at the meeting were Hon. Adefunmilayo Tejuosho, Hon. Olumuyiwa Jimoh and Hon. Segun Olulade.

Adeyeye, during the meeting, described the incident as “unacceptable and barbaric”.

At the end of the meeting, the state House of Assembly announced a million naira cash reward and N250, 000 to anyone who can give a lead and vital information to the committee on the two sexually assaulted women.

Adeyeye said: Lagos State House of Assembly will do everything within its power to defend the human rights of citizens as stipulated in 1999 Constitution as amended. No Nigerian, no matter his offence, deserves to be treated in this manner.” Referring to the video, which went viral on the internet, the lawmaker stressed that the attack is condemnable in its entirety and reiterated that the House would leave no stone unturned to get justice for the women.

Other representatives of non-governmental organisations who spoke tasked government to do more in fishing out the culprits.

Earlier, the video clip of the incident where the horrific scene of sexual assault showed, at the meeting, how the women were tortured and pepper administered into their private parts.

My story, Ejigbo council boss

The Chairman of Ejigbo LCDA, Kehinde Bamigbetan, condemned in totality the torture of the two women. The council boss, while making his presentation at the stakeholders meeting, said he became aware of the incident for the first time on December 3, 2013, on Facebook, through one of his Face Book friends, Modupe Debbie Ariyo, who posted the video clip that showed the torture of the women on her page with a question to him if he had knowledge of the incident.

Bamigbetan explained further that during his chat with Modupe on Facebook, he was able to establish that the originator of the clip is one Sola Julius, and that all efforts to trace him or track him down to enable him get to the root of the matter proved abortive.

“The first time I watched the video clip on December 3, I spent two minutes watching it and, during the second time, on December 7, 2013, I watched the full clip of eight minutes, two seconds, and i felt seriously sad about the inhuman treatment melted out to the two women, just because they were alleged to have stolen pepper,”the LCDA boss said.

“I took special interest in the incident, after I established that the barbaric act took place in the local government, where I am the chief security officer.”

He explained that, thereafter, he launched a private investigation into the incident, meeting with many stakeholders in the council, trying to find out from them if they had knowledge of the incident, but, to his surprise, all of them, including the

Iyaloja and Babaloja of Ejigbo Market, denied having knowledge of the incident.

“Further investigation led me to a leader of a vigilante body in the locality who confirmed to me that the incident actually took place in Ejigbo, but the men who tortured the women had been identified and their vigilante body disbanded.”

Bamgbetan added that he had furnished the DPO, of Ejigbo with all the necessary information at his disposal, to help him and his men in their investigation.

“I was told that the incident happened in February, 2013 and that the husband of one of the victims is a palm wine tapper while the other lady is her step daughter. I went to report the matter to the DPO of Ejigbo Police Station when I confirmed that the incident happened in Central Market, Iyana Ejigbo from some security men. It was also learned that the women stole the pepper overnight,” he stated.

He revealed further that he called a meeting of the peace and security committee of the council over the matter. Bamigbetan added that he used the opportunity of a 16-day activity of Women Rights Initiative in Ejigbo to raise the issue and told the people what he knew about the matter.

Blended pepper

Meanwhile, a report, on Thursday, on Channels Television, confirmed that one of the assaulted women has died. The woman, identified as Julie in the report, was said to have been brought from her home town, Tapa, Badagry to work as a canteen attendant. According to the report, three women were tortured and not two as seen in the video. The third woman was identified as the mother of the two women shown in the video. Recounting her ordeal, Mrs Ajoke Agomah, said she was stripped and blended pepper poured into her private part.

“It was the most horrifying experience of my life. Battered, Blended pepper in my private part, I didn’t know I would survive”, she said.

Confirming the death of her daughter, Mr Filma Agomah, told the television channel that Julie died in Badagry while his wife and the other 12-yr-old daughter had relocated to Ilorin. He alleged that the torture of his wife and daughters was carried out by some Odua Peoples Congress, OPC, members who also sacked him from his apartment.

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