

6-year-old girl raped to death in Kaduna mosque

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By Ibrahim HassanWuyo & Ike Uchechukwu

A six-year-old girl has been raped to death in a mosque by yet-to-be-identified persons in Kaduna. This came at a time the European Union/United Nations EU-UN Spotlight Initiative raised the alarm over an increasing number of various forms of gender-based violence in Cross River and Ebonyi states during the nationwide lockdown.

Residents of Kurmin Mashi, an old settlement in Kaduna, who were said to be have been horrified by the discovery of the girl's corpse by early Muslim worshippers, reportedly alerted the police.

"Her lifeless body was found in a mosque located at New Road, Kurmin Mashi by Nnamdi Azikiwe bypass on Friday," said a source.

Confirming the incident, Kaduna State Police Command, which identified the little girl as Khadijah Ya'u said it had commenced investigation on the matter.

ASP Mohammed Jalige, the Police Public Relations Officer of the command, said their officers had since swung into action.

He said: "No stone would be left unturned in ensuring that perpetrators of the heinous crime were apprehended and brought to book.

"An investigation into the matter has commenced in earnest. No arrest has been made. Police detectives attached to Kurmi-Mashi Division of the Command have launched an investigation to unravel the mystery.

"Operatives from that(Kurmin-Mashi) division received a call from a resident in the community that they saw a dead body lying in the mosque. You know since the lockdown, no mosque has been opened for worship, except for Friday prayers. They discovered the dead body around 3:00 pm close to prayer time."

Meanwhile, the European Union and United Nations, in what is described as EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, have raised the alarm over an increasing number of various forms of gender-based violence in Cross River and Ebonyi states during the nationwide lockdown.

Ijeoma Onuoha-Ogwe, Communication Officer UNICEF, Enugu, raised the alarm yesterday during a two-day media engagement dialogue on ending violence against women and girls organised by EU-UN spotlights Initiative, in collaboration with Ebonyi State chapter of National Orientation Agency, NOA.

Ijeoma said there seemed to be an increase in the incidents of rape and other forms of violence against women during the lockdown as a lot of people, including children's movement, were restricted.

She said: " We cannot sit and wait for the lockdown to be over while there is an alarming rate of violence against women and children this period.

"We must all act now and make our voices heard in a meaningful way to end gender-based violence by supporting all forms of platforms that will boost the effort in the campaign against gender-based violence," she said.

She said gender-based violence was increasingly alarming in Ebonyi and Cross River states, stressing that the ugly trend was no longer acceptable.

She urged media practitioners to make meaningful noise in a bid to ensure the public is well sensitised to have a better understanding of the menace of gender-

based violence ravaging women and children in our communities and society at large.

“Gender-based violence has become more common in Cross River and Ebonyi, it has become pertinent for us to expose this ugly trend and bring it to the fore in a bid to address the problem by sensitising the affected persons.

“The girl child is usually vulnerable due to our laws, culture, the constitution as well as religion. We must speak about the spikes because most times, the perpetrators are insiders – family members and neighbours.

“When not properly checked, they tend to clamp down on their victims without any restrictions. Lockdown has also increased female genital mutilation because many of the girls are now at home and cannot escape as they used to before the act.”

In his remarks, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF, Enugu, Dr Ibrahim Conteh, said Nigeria needed to brace up because of the way things were going.

Conteh said because of our environmental factors, “We had thought the virus could not spread as it should be but that is not the case and we need to step up our preventive practices.”

He expressed satisfaction that the rate of fatality as a result of the virus was lower, compared to what it was at the beginning and this is as a result of awareness from doctors enlightening people on early detection and treatment which makes survival level high.

“ If we sit back, it will be more fatal and it is very difficult to contain people. People find it difficult to stay at home because of the need to feed the family. This virus does not look like it will finish on time.

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“The message of COVID-19 resonates in big cities but in villages, people do not care and when you are complacent, it will be difficult to manage and what is happening now is community transmission and the media has a big role to play on this for the message to get to the communities.

“So let us continue to work together to send out these enlightenment messages on COVID-19 and violence against children, women and girls at the same time,” he said.

On his part, Child Protection Specialist, Victor Atuchukwu of UNICEF, said the two states were selected by EU-UN Spotlight initiative's Gender-Based Violence intervention programmes because facts gathered there-in were not palatable, hence the need to urgently deal with it.

He also called on journalists to always consider the survivors by portraying the right narratives instead of painting them as victims or further victimising them.

Atuchukwu, who explained that gender, which refers to the physical and biological differences between male and female, has evolved in context over time due to culture and tradition.

He said there was a need to consciously enlighten the traditional institution on the negative impact of all forms of gender-based violence, adding that blame game, which he described as unacceptable, must stop.