



...Demands justice for murder victim with Down syndrome
By Sola Ogundipe

has condemned the spate of violent attacks, abuse and discrimination against individuals with Down Syndrome and other intellectual disabilities.

Making the call while demanding justice for Deborah, a teenager with Down syndrome allegedly murdered in Calabar recently, the Foundation's National Administrator, Mrs. Denis Nike, and the Legal Resource Person, Mrs. Ijeoma Fynecontry, urged the general public to work together in ensuring the safety and dignity of persons with disabilities in Nigeria.

In a statement entitled "Why we condemn heinous attack on individuals with Down Syndrome and other intellectual disabilities" the Foundation attributed the development to ignorance and harmful cultural beliefs, and called on government at all levels to take decisive action against abuse and violations of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Foundation quoted reports indicating that the girl's father justified the brutal act by falsely labelling his daughter a "witch" and a "snake" in the tragic incident that occurred on Saturday, February 15, 2025 in the Calabar South Local Government Area of the state.

The statement reads in part: "The Down Syndrome Foundation Nigeria is deeply appalled and outraged by the horrific murder of 16-year-old Ms. Deborah, a young girl with Down Syndrome, allegedly at the hands of her own father in Calabar, Cross River State.

"As an organization with branches in Lagos, Ibadan, and Abuja, we are committed to supporting numerous individuals with Down syndrome and intellectual disabilities across Nigeria. Our vision is to be a beacon of hope, leading the way toward a more inclusive society where the rights and opportunities of persons with Down syndrome become tangible realities."

"We strongly condemn this heinous crime and the alarming rise in violence, abuse, and discrimination against individuals with Down Syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. These targeted attacks, often fueled by ignorance and harmful cultural beliefs, continue to lead to devastating consequences.

"The Nigerian government, both at the Federal, State, Local government levels, must take urgent and decisive action to combat the systemic abuse and violations of the rights of persons with disabilities. Law enforcement agencies must ensure that existing laws and policies are strictly enforced, and perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice without delay.

“The mistreatment of persons with disabilities is a stark failure of our society to uphold their fundamental rights and dignity. It is unacceptable that crimes against this vulnerable group do not receive the urgent attention they deserve. Persons with Down Syndrome are human beings, full-fledged Nigerian citizens, and are entitled to the same rights and protections as every other individual.

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“A profound socio-cultural shift is urgently needed to eradicate stigma, promote inclusivity, and ensure accountability for those who perpetrate harm against persons with disabilities. There must be real consequences for these abuses, alongside nationwide awareness efforts to foster acceptance, respect, and protection of their rights.

The Down Syndrome Foundation Nigeria demands justice for Ms. Deborah and calls on all relevant authorities, civil society, and the general public to work together in ensuring the safety and dignity of persons with disabilities in Nigeria,” they asserted.