

Nigeria: a senator interrogated on his marriage with an Egyptian girlchild

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

YERIMA: ARRESTED! DETAINED BY NAPTIP

The Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) sincerely appreciates the efforts of NAPTIP who it is understood arrested and detained Senator Ahmend Sani Yerima for roughly three hours today before being released on bail after he had produced in his own hand writing a statement on his alleged marriage to a 14 year old Egyptian girl named as Mariam Maged M. Eladly. The marriage took place at the National Mosque in Abuja. Mariam apparently is the daughter of Senator Yerima's driver in Cairo. The sum of \$100,000 was allegedly paid as bride price to the girls parents.

This marriage raises several issues such as child abuse, sexual exploitation of a minor and cross border child trafficking. It is a clear violation of Nigerian laws which prohibits underage marriage to a child less than 18 years of age and it is contrary to Section 21 of the Child Rights Act, the Penal Code and the NAPTIP Act. The Nigerian Feminist Forum is calling on the:

Senate Committee on Ethics, Code of Conduct and Public Petitions to facilitate with utmost urgency the investigations into this alleged child marriage and where possible, prosecute all violations of the laws against such practices;

The Nigerian Government through its National Human Rights Commission and the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) to effectively carry out their statutory duties by upholding human rights and institute criminal proceedings against Him;

Government of Nigeria to pass into law the bill before parliament prohibiting Violence against Persons;

Urging the Governments of Nigeria and Egypt to urgently fulfil their obligations under the:

- a) African Charter;
- b) African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and
- c) Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa

Finally, the NFF wishes to acknowledge the role played by all it's strategic partners including the National Human Rights Commission, Alliances for Africa, WRAPA, FIDA Nigeria and several others in the campaign to see that justice is done.

Nigerian Feminist Forum

Contact: Nigeria Feminist Forum (NFF) co-hosted by Alliances for Africa and Baobab for Women's Human Rights.

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further information about the NFF can be found on the website at www.nigerianfeministforum.org

* *Source: Nigerian Feminist Forum*

Tue, May 18, 2010 4:54:42 PM

Nigeria: A senator states that religious rights supersede the law

Child Marriage: Yerima quizzed, granted bail

by Ben Agande

...I've not broken any law, he says

The National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) Tuesday interrogated the former governor of Zamfara state, Senator Ahmed Yerima over his alleged marriage to a 13-year-old Egyptian girl.

Although senator Yerima was granted bail after spending about three hours with the agency, he remained defiant saying his action could not be challenged for as long as he did not violate the Quran. It would be recalled that following the national outcry against the action of the senator, the NAPTIP invited him for interrogation.

Senator Yerima who was accompanied by some aides to the headquarters of the Agency reportedly told the investigators that in Islam, the age of a bride is not relevant when the issue of marriage is involved. He claimed that the constitution of the country guarantees him the right to practice his religion and in doing so he has to abide by all its tenets.

It was gathered that when he was asked to reveal the real age of the girl in question, he was said to have insisted that he will not disclose the age of the girl and that he did not see the passport.

Senator Yerima it was furtherd gathered claimed that his decision to marry in Nigeria was not because he wanted to beat the laws in Egypt but for the convenience of his family members and friends in Nigeria.

In a brief chat with journalists, a defiant Senator Yerima said he was not concerned about the cpontrouvery that has continued to trail his marriage to a minor because he has not broken any known law in Islam.

He said: "The Child Right Act they are talking about was brought to me in Zamfara as a governor, my people rejected it so also other states in the North it was rejected by the state assembly because it is against their religion", he stated.

Executive Secretary of the Agency, Simon Chuze Egede said his agency was on top of the investigation and that it has established that Egyptian law forbids marriage to an under age.

He said the investigations into the matter was neither politically motivated nor influenced by religion. "it is purely within our mandate having received petitions from so many interest groups."

"We are in touch with Egyptian authorities, we know it is illegal in Egypt and we do not need to get to Egypt before we get the age of the girl, within the federal capital there is a law against marriage to a minor and the law is no respecter of any person", he said adding that the agency will soon conclude its investigations on the matter and the whole Nigerians would know what really the issues are," he said.

* Source : Tuesday 18th May 2010, Vanguard Newspaper (a Nigerian National Daily)

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/05/18/child-marriage-yerima-quizzed-granted-bail/>
