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Ozoro Festival Assault: Strengthening Legislative Safeguards for Public Safety and Protection of Women

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Executive Summary

The recent Ozoro Festival in Delta State attracted national attention following viral reports of widespread harassment and sexual assault against women during the event. Initial statements by the Nigeria Police Force indicated that no formal rape complaints had been received, although investigations were ongoing. Subsequent victim testimonies, including that of a university student who reported being stripped naked and molested, have highlighted the scale and severity of the incident. In response, arrests were made, and the Delta State Government subsequently banned the festival. The episode reveals significant gaps in public safety management, event regulation, and protection mechanisms for women in public spaces.

The incident exposes systemic challenges including inadequate security planning for large gatherings, underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence due to stigma or fear, weak enforcement of laws protecting women, exploitation of cultural events by criminal elements, and limited accountability for organisers and community leaders. These concerns highlight the need for proactive institutional and legislative measures to protect vulnerable populations.

Given the constitutional guarantees of dignity, personal liberty, and security for all citizens, the Ozoro Festival incident emphasises the urgency of legislative intervention. The National Assembly has a critical role in strengthening institutional accountability, protecting women and vulnerable groups, addressing sexual violence as a public safety and public health concern, and restoring public confidence in law enforcement and justice systems.

Accordingly, the National Assembly, through its Committees on Police Affairs and Human Rights, may consider the following actions:

- Invite the Nigeria Police Force and relevant authorities to provide a comprehensive briefing on the incident, including investigation outcomes, adherence to due process, and prosecution plans.
- Mandate enhanced security planning for large public events, including prior notification, coordination with security agencies, and implementation of clear safety and crowd-control protocols.
- Legislate targeted funding for gender-based violence prevention and response, including emergency hotlines, rapid intervention units, and strengthened surveillance and intelligence mechanisms at high-risk events.
- Call on the National Orientation Agency to implement a structured, multi-year sensitisation programme on sexual violence and reporting mechanisms, conducted nationwide on a quarterly basis over at least three years.



- Engage traditional and community leaders to align cultural practices with human rights standards and ensure accountability for organisers of public events.

The Ozoro Festival incident represents a critical test of Nigeria's commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of its citizens, particularly women. Legislative action is essential to strengthen public safety frameworks, enhance accountability, and prevent recurrence. A coordinated and proactive response by the National Assembly will be instrumental in safeguarding citizens and reinforcing public trust in law enforcement and justice systems.

Background:

The Ozoro Festival in Delta State recently attracted national attention following viral reports of widespread harassment and sexual assault against women during the event¹. Initial statements by the Nigeria Police Force indicated that no formal rape complaints had been received, although investigations were ongoing².

However, subsequent victim testimony, including that of a university student who reported being stripped naked and molested, has reinforced concerns about the scale and severity of the incident³. While arrests have been made and the Delta State Government has banned the festival, the situation reveals significant gaps in public safety management, event regulation, and protection mechanisms for women in public spaces.

Issue:

The incident reveals systemic challenges, including:

- Inadequate security planning and oversight for large public gatherings
- Underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence, possibly due to stigma and fear
- Weak enforcement of laws protecting women from assault and harassment
- Exploitation of cultural events by criminal elements and
- Limited accountability for organisers and community leaders

Rationale for Legislative Actions:

The Nigerian Constitution guarantees the right to dignity, personal liberty, and security for all citizens. The Ozoro incident stresses the urgent need for legislative intervention to

- Strengthen institutional accountability in the prevention of public disorder

¹ Punch. (2026, March 24). Ozoro festival: Police dismiss 'rape festival' claims, vow to arraign suspects. Punch. <https://punchng.com/ozoro-festival-police-dismiss-rape-festival-claims-vow-to-arraign-suspects/>

² ibid

³ Omafuaire, A. (2026, March 28). Ozoro Fertility Festival: 'I was stripped naked, molested' — 300-level female student. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2026/03/ozoro-fertility-festival-i-was-stripped-naked-molested-300-level-female-student/>



- Protect women and vulnerable groups from violence in communal spaces
- Address sexual violence as both a public safety and public health concern
- Restore public confidence in law enforcement and justice systems

Legislative action is necessary to move from reactive responses to proactive prevention.

Recommendations to the National Assembly:

The National Assembly, through its Committees on Police Affairs and Human Rights, may consider the following actions:

1. Invite the Nigeria Police Force and relevant authorities to provide a comprehensive briefing on the incident, including investigation outcomes, compliance with due process, and prosecution plans.
2. Mandate enhanced security planning for large public events, including prior notification, coordination with security agencies, and the implementation of clear safety and crowd-control protocols.
3. Legislate targeted funding for gender-based violence prevention and response, including emergency hotlines, rapid intervention units, and improved surveillance and intelligence gathering at high-risk events.
4. Call on the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to implement a structured multi-year sensitisation program on sexual violence and reporting mechanisms, conducted nationwide on a quarterly basis over at least three years.
5. Engage traditional and community leaders to align cultural practices with human rights standards and ensure accountability for organisers of public events.

Conclusion:

The Ozoro Festival incident represents a critical test of Nigeria's commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of its citizens, particularly women. It presents the urgent need for legislative action to strengthen public safety frameworks, enhance accountability, and prevent recurrence. A proactive and coordinated response by the National Assembly could be instrumental in safeguarding citizens and reinforcing public trust in law enforcement and justice systems.

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