

Nigeria: Islam has no age barrier for marriage – MURIC Director

[Ese Oruru is a 14 year old girl](#), kidnapped by a young man she met innocently, raped, forcibly converted to islam and now 5 months pregnant. Sound familiar?

Islam is a complete way of life. As a religion, non-Muslims will have to take Muslims as they are, not as they want them to be. Neither Muslims nor their religion should be judged according to other standards. There will never be any inter-religious understanding so long as non-Muslims continue to measure Muslims and their way of life by Christian, Buddhist or Confucianist yardsticks. The simple truth is: Islam has no age barrier in marriage and Muslims have no apology for those who refuse to accept this, particularly since 99.99 per cent of such marriages are conducted among Muslims themselves. If the man is a Muslim and the girl is also a Muslim and the girl's parents give their approval, what is the business of any non-Muslim in that? It is sheer interference in the affair of Muslims and an attempt to exert undue influence on them. More often than not, those who interfere in this manner have ulterior motives. It is either for the purpose of smearing the image of Islam or to gain a comparative advantage and score a religious point (for their own faith of course).

We are not unaware of all these antics, yet we patiently endure them. Non-Muslims should therefore keep off Muslims' affairs.

That means your organisation, Muslim Right Concern, supports child marriage?

I am a Muslim and I support all truly Muslim practices. Our organisation, MURIC, is an Islamic human rights outfit. So

naturally we should support all principles of Islam. It promotes Allah-given fundamental human rights as well as Allah-given fundamental rights of all creatures, animals – mammals, invertebrates, birds in the sky, the environment and all natural entities. Everything created by Allah has a right. We promote their rights. MURIC believes in all Shariah-compliant marriages, regardless of the age of the girl. The sensationalisation of intra-Muslim marriages to the so-called minors is uncalled for and, more often than not, done with hidden malice. For your information, we don't have what you call 'child marriage'. We have nikah (Islamic marriage). I affirm clearly, emphatically and unequivocally, that what happens among Muslims is strictly a Muslim affair and should remain so as long as it is Shariah-compliant. Non-Muslims have no right to poke their noses into any religious action taken by Muslims for Muslims. Nikah is a marriage of the Muslims conducted by the Muslims for the Muslims. How the Muslims do it is nobody's business.

What is your view on the abduction, forceful marriage and conversion to Islam of Ese Oruru by Yunusa Dahiru?

MURIC issued a statement on this ugly episode immediately it broke out. Let me pick the highlights. It was a kind of Romeo and Juliet affair. We demanded that Yunusa Dahiru, the 'boyfriend' with whom the girl eloped, should be arrested and prosecuted because the girl is a minor and a Christian. Attempting to marry off the girl without her parent's permission is not only a breach of common law but also a violation of the Shariah provision on the need for the parents' approval before nikah can be deemed valid.

Where is the forceful marriage they keep talking about? But we in MURIC are displeased with the conduct of our Romeo (Yunusa) for two major reasons: One, he did not listen to his father who warned him not to bring the girl to Kano. Islam frowns heavily on disobedience to parents –Qur'an 17:23; 31:14. Two, contrary to the provisions of Qur'an 17:32 which forbids

fornication and adultery, he may have had carnal knowledge of the girl. . .

Ese's father has his own faults despite his attempt to blame the Emir of Kano. But the truth is, Ese's father has a big portion of the blame; same with the mother. How did they train their daughter?

But is the forceful conversion right?

Regarding Ese's conversion, it is not acceptable to us yet, until the girl is 18. At least, that is what the Nigerian law says and we have to comply since we are Nigerians. The condition for accepting conversion as valid in Islam is different, however. It is *buluug*, which is maturity that matters. *Buluug* is measured by the time the girl starts menstruating, which may vary according to her physiological condition.

Would you prefer Yunusa being tried under Sharia to being tried under the penal or criminal law, having allegedly committed crimes across two states?

Oh yes, I would love that (to be tried under Sharia law)!

The Emir of Kano has been criticised for his alleged role in the Ese-Yunusa case. Do you think he deserves the criticisms?

Those who criticise the Emir of Kano on this case are ethnic bigots...He is an Emir and a versatile Islamic scholar. This was something I also did not know when he was still serving as the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria. I came to know later that he speaks Arabic fluently. He is a great asset, a pearl among his peers. You can only hate him out of envy.

Following Ese's case is a growing number of allegations of other minors being abducted, forced into marriage and converted to Islam. Isn't this worrisome?

Which cases? Do you have the proof? . . .Why is the press silent about hundreds of Muslim children taken to Christian camps from Edo State? Why isn't the press interested in that?

What is the Muslim community going to do about these alleged abductions (like the one in Sokoto)?

There you go again! Baseless, clueless, unfounded and untenable allegations; rumours, rumours and rumours! Where you have cases, bring them forward. *Try him with [this](#) – Ifeoma Nichodemus aged 15.*

Abductions of female children for sex slavery and forced marriage have become a trend in the country. What's the way out?

That's not true. You are making a mountain out of a molehill and I am not under any obligation to answer that kind of question. It is prejudicial.

Someone like Governor Ayodele Fayose has alleged that President Muhammadu Buhari is trying to Islamise Nigeria. Do you agree with him?

The fear is unfounded and the comment is most unfair. Unlike Ayo Fayose, Buhari is neither a religious zealot nor an ethnic jingoist. He (Fayose) is the worst governor Nigeria ever had. He is trying to whip up religious sentiment. He wants to start a religious war. People like Fayose cannot hold Nigeria together. I am waiting for the day when he will seek a higher position at the federal level. He holds sectarian and parochial views. He is Islamophobic.