Lift my suspension, pay withheld salaries, Prof acquitted of rape tells UNIBEN

Date: 2024-10-31

Source: https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/lift-my-suspension-pay-withheld-salaries-prof-acquitted-of-rape-tells-uniben/

After three years of a legal battle, Dr. Omowumi Olabode Steven Ekundayo, a lecturer at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), who was standing trial for alleged sexual assault (rape) of a female student and was recently discharged and acquitted by an Edo State High Court sitting in Benin City, has called for the lifting of his suspension.  
  
  
  
Dr. Ekundayo, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, made this appeal in a chat with newsmen in Benin City on Thursday.  
  
He said, “UNIBEN authorities should lift my suspension, facilitate the payment of my withheld salaries, and announce my promotion to Professor, which is already due. I was successfully assessed for Associate Prof in 2021, and I am already qualified for Professorship. By His Grace, I have all it takes.”  
  
Dr. Ekundayo was accused of sexually assaulting a final-year female student in his office on October 5, 2021. Consequently, he was issued a query and placed on interdiction pending the final determination of the case in court by the university management.  
  
  
  
The Presiding Judge, Justice Mary Itsueli, upheld the no-case submission filed by the defense counsel, former Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice in Edo State, Dr. Osagie Obayuwana.  
  
Justice Itsueli noted that the prosecution team failed to present the University of Benin Health Center medical report as evidence during the trial, which undermined the claims of the claimant and UNIBEN.  
  
Dr. Ekundayo said, “They should pay my withheld salaries for three years. They were paying between ₦6,000 and ₦49,000 as my basic salary for three years, contrary to the rules and regulations… I had a close shave with death by suicide, depression, and even amnesia. I sincerely believe the university authorities could have been more sympathetic and fair regarding my predicament. The way they handled the investigation and the type of news they spread were shocking.”  
  
  
  
The lecturer, expressing gratitude to God Almighty for saving him from what he described as “premeditated false accusations,” thanked all who supported him during his ordeal. Regarding his accuser, he said, “I believe Anita Adesuwa, the girl, was manipulated socio-spiritually or hypnotically by those who wanted to ruin both me and her. I hope she seeks forgiveness from God, Nature, and Society.”  
  
Dr. Ekundayo added, “I might consider suing them for damages, depending on UNIBEN authorities’ response post-verdict. If they handle things properly, they should call me for a humane reconciliation because, by His grace, I still intend to work there.”  
  
Asked if he would seek revenge for the injustice that led to his suspension over three years ago, Ekundayo replied, “I am not thinking of revenge at all. I would be offending all that God has done for me these three years if I pursued crude revenge. That would reduce me to the level of their primitive instincts. For me, victory is the sweetest revenge, and I already have it. You reflect to the world who you truly are. This is my message and my stance.”