Robinho awaits fate on serving nine-year rape sentence in Brazil

Date: 2024-03-20

Source: https://guardian.ng/news/robinho-awaits-fate-on-serving-nine-year-rape-sentence-in-brazil/

(FILES) Robinho of Brazil's Atletico Mineiro gestures during their 2017 Copa Libertadores match against Bolivia's Wilstermann held at Mineirao stadium, in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, on August 9, 2017. - Brazilian justice will examine on March 20, 2024, whether former soccer player Robinho should serve his sentence for rape in Brazil, where the trial against Dani Alves sparked criticism for the silence of the cream of the football world in cases of violence against women. The magistrates of the Superior Court of Justice (STJ), based in Brasilia, will evaluate the request of the Italian justice system to homologate a nine-year prison sentence imposed on the former striker in Milan in 2017 and ultimately ratified in Rome in 2022. (Photo by DOUGLAS MAGNO / AFP)  
  
  
  
Brazil’s justice system on Wednesday will decide whether former Manchester City and Real Madrid striker Robinho will serve his nine-year rape sentence, handed down by an Italian court, in the South American country.  
  
  
  
Brazil’s Superior Court of Justice (STJ) will examine the Italian request to approve the prison sentence that was imposed in 2017 and ratified in 2022.  
  
“I hope that here in Brazil I can have the voice that I didn’t have there,” Robinho, who has protested his innocence, said in an interview with Brazilian network TV Record on Sunday.  
  
Robson de Souza, popularly known as “Robinho”, remains free despite his conviction for being among a group of six men who gang raped a young Albanian woman out celebrating her 23rd birthday at a Milan nightclub in 2013.  
  
  
  
Former Brazil international Robinho was playing his club football for AC Milan at the time.  
  
His sentence was upheld by Italy’s highest court, after which Italian prosecutors issued an international arrest warrant.  
  
Brazil does not extradite its nationals, however, and Italy asked that Robinho be made to serve his sentence in his home country instead.  
  
  
  
On Sunday, Robinho accused the Italian justice system of “racism”.  
  
“It was consensual,” Robinho told TV Record.  
  
“I never denied it (the encounter). I could have denied it because my DNA was not there, but I’m not a liar.  
  
“I played for four years in Italy and I got tired of seeing stories about racism. The same people who do nothing about racism, which I repudiate, are the ones who condemned me.”  
  
If the ruling goes against him, the 40-year-old could still remain free while awaiting an appeal to Brazil’s Supreme Court.  
  
  
  
Brazil president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has said that he hopes Robinho can “serve” the sentence on Brazilian soil.  
  
– ‘Unprecedented case’ –  
  
According to Brazilian media, magistrates are expected to approve Italy’s request.  
  
“Approval is not common, because the law that allows it is relatively recent. It would be an unprecedented case in Brazil,” lawyer Leonardo Pantaleao told AFP.  
  
Meanwhile, Robinho’s case and that of former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain defender Dani Alves have sparked criticism over the failure of football authorities in Brazil to condemn violence against women.  
  
  
  
In February, former Brazil international full-back Alves, 40, was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison for raping a woman in a nightclub in Barcelona.  
  
The case was met with silence from the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), the player’s former clubs and former teammates.  
  
Former Brazil coach Tite said he could not “make a judgement without having all the facts and truthful information” about the case.  
  
For Robinho, it has been a dramatic fall from grace.  
  
  
  
Having begun his career at Santos, a team made famous by Brazil great Pele, Robinho was touted as the successor to the golden generation of Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Ronaldinho.  
  
In 2005, Robinho left Santos to join Zinedine Zidane, international teammate Ronaldo and David Beckham at Real Madrid.  
  
But although he played for big teams in Europe and won two Confederations Cups — in 2005 and 2009 — and a Copa America in 2007, Robinho only displayed his talent intermittently.  
  
  
  
In 2009, he was briefly detained in England for an alleged sexual assault on a young woman, but the charges were dropped after an investigation.  
  
He returned to Santos in 2020, but the club suspended the deal after pressure from fans, sponsors and the media, leading to the abrupt end of his career.