South Africa rearrests Nigerian pastor acquitted of rape

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A Nigerian televangelist recently acquitted of multiple rape charges has been rearrested on immigration offences, South African police said on Saturday.  
  
Timothy Omotoso was released last month, eight years after he was jailed to be tried on charges of raping and sexually assaulting several young women from his church.  
  
His acquittal drew anger across South Africa after the judge found that, while the pastor’s explanations appeared improbable, state prosecutors had mishandled the case against him.  
  
Immigration authorities and police arrested Omotoso in the town of East London on Saturday morning, “just after church”, police commissioner General Fannie Masemola told journalists.  
  
“He will be facing charges related to violations to the Immigration Act and he will appear in court on Monday,” he said.  
  
The 66-year-old pastor at the Jesus Dominion International (JDI) church based in South Africa was arrested in 2017 on 32 charges, including rape, sexual exploitation and human trafficking.  
  
Several young women, some of whom were still in school at the time, testified that they were handpicked by Omotoso, who would pray for forgiveness after each encounter with them.  
  
In April, Eastern Cape High Court judge Irma Schoeman criticised the prosecution’s handling of the case, saying the state had not proved beyond reasonable doubt its case against Omotoso and two assistants, who also faced charges.  
  
South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape and gender-based violence in the world.  
  
Over 42,500 rapes were reported in the 2023-24 financial year, according to police statistics, amounting to more than 116 rapes per day.