Dani Alves’s rape trial begins in Spain

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Dani Alves’s rape trial begins in Spain  
  
Former Barcelona and Brazil football player Dani Alves has gone on trial in Spain accused of raping a woman in a nightclub.  
  
The 40-year-old has been in prison without bail for more than a year since the alleged incident took place in December 2022.  
  
Mr Alves could face up 12 years in prison if found guilty.  
  
He first denied having met his accuser, but later said they had had consensual sex. His trial ends tomorrow.  
  
More than 30 people, including Dani Alves and his estranged wife, are expected to testify.  
  
The Barcelona court yesterday denied his request to suspend the trial so that he could be given more time to prepare – rejecting his claim that he had suffered a trial by media.  
  
Mr Alves’s accuser was among those to give evidence on the first day of the trial – speaking from behind a screen to protect her identity.  
  
She alleges he lured her into a toilet in the VIP section of a nightclub in Barcelona, and then forced her to have sex with him.  
  
The woman’s cousin and a friend, who were both with her on the night of the alleged assault, also testified . They said that Mr Alves had groped and flirted with them earlier in the evening.  
  
They also said the woman had initially been unwilling to make a complaint because she feared she would not be believed.  
  
In Spain, a claim of rape is investigated under the general accusation of sexual assault, and convictions can lead to prison sentences of four to 15 years.  
  
The public prosecutor in the case is seeking a nine-year jail term for Mr Alves, and for him to pay damages of €150,000 (£128,000) to the woman.  
  
His mother, Lucia Alves – who was at the court yesterday alongside her son – could face prosecution herself after she named her son’s accuser in a social media post before the trial.  
  
That was after a court had ruled that the woman could not be identified for her protection.  
  
Mr Alves was formally charged in August and a court later decided that there was enough evidence to send him to trial.  
  
Repeated requests for him to be released on bail have been denied because the courts considered the Brazilian national a flight risk.  
  
Dani Alves is one of the most decorated footballers in history and has played for a host of top clubs including Barcelona and Paris Saint Germain.  
  
He made more than 400 appearances for Barcelona, winning six league titles and three Champions Leagues across two spells, and was also part of Brazil’s 2022 World Cup squad.  
  
His most recent club, Mexican side Pumas UNAM, terminated the Brazilian’s contract with immediate effect in January 2023.