Appeal court reserves judgment in Baba Ijesha’s conviction

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The Court of Appeal in Lagos State has reserved judgment in the appeal filed by Nollywood actor, Olanrewaju James, alias Baba Ijesha, challenging his conviction by an Ikeja High Court over the sexual assault of a minor.  
  
The three-man panel of the appellate court, led by Justice Folasade Ojo, reserved the appeal for judgment yesterday after listening to arguments of the appellant and the respondent.  
  
Other members of the panel are Justice Abdullahi Bayero and Justice Paul Bassi.  
  
In his notice of appeal, Nollywood actor prayed the appellate court to set aside the judgment of the lower court.  
  
During the hearing of the appeal yesterday Olanrewaju’s counsel, Kayode Olabiran, told the court that the appeal was filed on June 1, 2023.  
  
He argued that the prosecution could not prove that he sexually assaulted the victim.  
  
Olabiran said: “The charge itself is centered on defilement of a minor but the prosecution couldn’t prove the victim’s age. The appellant was set up. The appellant is an actor. He acted in a script that he was invited to act by his colleague (PW1), Damilola Adekoya a.k.a Princess.  
  
“Damilola Adekoya asked the appellant to come and act a script. It is in the statement of PW1, at Panti Police Station, unknowingly to the appellant there was a CCTV in the sitting room.  
  
Whatever we watched in that movie was a script by the producer and the video of the scene of the acting was tendered by the prosecution.  
  
“Based on his confessional statement as at the day of the arrest, he was under duress and there were so many people beating him, and so he confessed to the offence.”  
  
Olabiran, however, urged the court to allow the appeal and set aside the judgment of the lower court.  
  
The Director of Public Prosecution (DPP), Babajide Martins, urged the court to dismiss the appeal for lacking in merit. He argued that the appeal by the appellant was a misconception.  
  
Martins also urged the court to affirm the judgment of the lower court delivered on July 14, 2022, which convicted Baba Ijesha of indecent treatment of a child and sexual assault.  
  
On the victim’s age, Martin submitted that the victim said she was born on October 6, 2006, which puts her age at 14, in 2013, when the offence was committed.  
  
“At the time she gave evidence in 2021, she was 17 years old, which still makes her a child,” he argued.  
  
Justice Oluwatoyin Taiwo (rtd) of an Ikeja Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Court, on July 14, 2022, sentenced Baba Ijesha to five years imprisonment over the sexual assault of a minor.  
  
Justice Toyin convicted and sentenced the actor after he was found guilty of four out of six counts, preferred against him by the Lagos State government.