IN THE HIGH COURT OF SIERRA LEONE (HOLDEN AT FREETOWN)

THE STATE

VS.

MOHAMED SESAY

BEFORE THE HON. MR. JUSTICE JOHN BOSCO ALLIEU, J.A. HUDGMENT DATED THE 28DAY OF 2022

COUNSEL:

A. KARGBO C. TUCKER FOR THE STATE

FOR THE ACCUSED

JUDGMENT

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The Accused pleaded NOT GUILTY to a 1 (ONE) Count Indictment dated 9th November 2017 which states as follows:

STATEMENT OF OFFENCE

Sexual Penetration contrary to Section 19 of the Sexual Offences Act, 2012, Act No. 12 of 2012.

PARTICULARS OF OFFENCE

MOHAMED SESAY on the 23rd day of April 2017 at Freetown in the Western Area of the Republic of Sierra Leone engaged in an act of Sexual Penetration with SALAMATU YUSIF KOROMA, a child.

II

The Prosecution called 6 (Six) witnesses in support of its case.

P.W.1. is Alice Margay – D/Sgt 9928 attached at the F.S.U. Harbour Police Station, Freetown. She recognized the Accused and she knows the victim in this case.

She recalled 25th April 2017. She was on duty at the F.S.U. Harbour Police Station, Freetown, when the victim, Salamatu Yusif Koroma, was brought in by her parents who reported a case of sexual penetration against the Accused who also was brought into the said Police Station.

This witness obtained statements from the victim and other relevant witnesses and further issued a Police Medical Request Form to the parents of the victim for her to be examined and treated at the Rainbow Centre. She later collected the endorsed Medical Request Form from the Rainbow Centre before obtaining VCS from the Accused.

On 25th April 2017, D/PC 14108 Palmer A and herself obtained VCS from the Accused. He was cautioned and questioned in creole and he made statement in creole which was recorded in English. At the conclusion, the statement was read over and explained to the Accused in creole which he admitted to be true and correct by affixing his RHTP. D/PC 1408 Palmer A. signed as the witness which she signed as the recorder.

Following a no objection statement from the Defence Counsel, the said Statement was tendered as EXA. On 17th May 2017, together with D/Sgt 8298 Bangura M, they charged the Accused with the

offence of Sexual Penetration of a child. He was cautioned and questioned in creole and he made statement in creole which was recorded in English. At the conclusion, it was read over and explained to him in creole which he admitted to be true and correct by affixing his RHTP. The statement was witnessed by D/Sgt 8298 Bangura M, while this witness signed as the recorder.

Following a no objection Statement from the Defence Counsel, the statement was tendered as "EX.B".

On 25th April 2017, together with D/Sgt 8298 Bangura M, the victim Salamatu Yusif Koroma, her parents and the Accused all visited the scene of crime which is a storey house fenced with a gate wherein there are other buildings facing the house of the victim. There are four (4) rooms in the house with two (2) rooms facing the other 2 (two). The Accused's room was inspected and the victim identified where the Accused was when he inserted his fingers into her vagina.

After visiting the scene of crime all of them returned to the Police Station.

This witness was Cross Examined by Defence Counsel. She confirmed that the report was made on 25th April 2017, the Accused was charged on 17th May 2017 and that the investigations lasted for about 1 (one) week. In his Statement, the Accused denied the allegations. The Accused had lived with the victim and her parents for about 6 (six) months. The alleged incident occurred on Sunday 23rd April 2017, but the report was made on 25th April 2017. This witness answered that the Accused 13th her that the mother of victim, on the 23rd April 2017, sent him to purchase mosquito coils for her and that the mosquito coil was collected from him insider the house. The Accused did not tell her that he was sitting together with victim's mother and that both of them were eating. The victim did not tell her that the Accused did not enter the room.

This witness further answered that the investigations lasted for about 1 (one) month and that the file was sent to the D.P.P. for advice but she didn't recall the date the said file was sent to the D.P.P. for advice.

She maintained that she visited the scene of crime and interviewed independent witnesses but could not recall the name of the neighbour she interviewed although she recorded the statement of the independent witnesses. She interviewed the victim at the time the report was made and she was 7 (seven) years old. All the interviews are contained in the Case and Enquiry file.

There was no questions for this witness in Re-Examination.

III

P.W.2. is Salamatu Y. Koroma, a class 4 Pupil of Yannie Memorial Pre Primary School, Fisheries, Kissy Dockyard, the victim in this case. She lived together with her father, Yusif Hassan Massama Koroma and mother, Hawa Kamara.

She recognized the Accused who also lived with them together in the same house.

She recalled 23rd April 2017. In the evening, she was studying in the sitting room when the Accused sent her to purchase mosquito coils. She did and when she returned, she handed over the mosquito coils to the Accused who was in his room. The Accused closed the door when she entered his room. He held on to her hands and tied them. He also gagged her.

He undressed her whilst he too undressed himself. He inserted his penis into her vagina and she felt pain. He took out a scissors and threatened to kill her if she tells her mother what had transpired between them. Whilst they were still in the room, the Accused sent her sister to purchase bread for him. Whilst wearing her pants, her sister was attempting to enter the room in order to give the Accused the bread he had sent her to purchase. Her sister informed her Aunt, Kadi, who in turn summoned her and enquired what had transpired between her and the Accused. In the presence of the Accused, she told her what had transpired between the Accused and herself. Her Aunt, Kadi, informed her mother who in turn summoned one Aunty Dora to examine her. She did and informed her father about the result who by then was sleeping inside his room and who was woken up by Aunty Dora. Her father accompanied her to the F.S.U. at Habour Police Station where a report was made against the Accused. They returned home where a quarrel ensued at night between her mother and uncle, who had brought the Accused to their house to stay therein.

In the morning of the following day, her mother took her to the Hospital where she was examined and treated. She made Statement to the Police.

This witness was Cross Examined by the Defence Counsel. She answered that the incident occurred on a Monday and her relatives were present when the Accused sent her to buy mosquito coils. Other people were also present when she retuned with the mosquito coils. The Accused shared the same room with her Uncle and at the time the Accused sent her to purchase the mosquito coils, her Uncle was not at home. Other people were in the veranda when the Accused received the mosquito coils from her insider the house. It is possible for one sitting in the veranda to see what happened in the sitting room.

She further answered that the name of her sister is Hawa and she met her coming from the Accused's room. She denied that the Accused and her parted their different ways when she handed over the mosquito coils to the Accused. In the Magistrate Court, she testified that when her sister, Hawa, entered the room, she met the Accused having an affair with her.

She maintained that all what she had testified in this Hon. Court is the truth.

She further maintained that complaints were made to Aunty Kadi. She entered the room of the Accused when the other people were in the veranda. Her mother was not at home when the incident occurred.

She answered that the Accused had been sending her to purchase mosquito coils for him and that the Accused used to have sexual intercourse with her before – about 4 (four) times now.

She knows the Accused to be a barber who goes to his shop in the morning and returned in the evening. At any material time that the Accused returned home in the evening, people were always at home. She maintained that she entered the Accused's room when she returned with the mosquito coils and that the Accused had sexual intercourse with her. Aunty Kadi is her Aunt and she had not been at logger heads with the Accused. She didn't know whether Aunty Kadi and the Accused always quarrels at home.

There were no questions for this witness in Re-Examination.

IV

P.W.3. is Umu Hawa Koroma, a businesswoman who lives at 24A Africanus Road, Kissy, Freetown. She recognized the Accused who is the brother of her husband and P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma, the victim and her daughter. All of them were staying together in the same house.

She recalled 23rd April 2017. She was at home on that day when something transpired between her daughter, P.W.2., the victim and the Accused. As at that time, the victim, P.W.2., her daughter, was 7

(seven) years old. The Accused usually send the victim, P.W.2., to buy mosquito coils for him. She was given an information concerning the Accused by her other daughter but at that time, the Accused was not at home. They called the Accused who came home and confronted him with the allegations that he had an affair with the victim, P.W.2., as reported by Dora. The Accused replied that it was the victim, P.W.2. who tempted him. The victim was also interrogated and in the presence of the Accused confirmed that at any time the Accused sent her to purchase mosquito coils for him, he will pull her into his room and sexually penetrate her. The victim further said that she was always reluctant but the Accused said that she will beat her up. She was at home together with the Accused when Victim's father, Yusif Koroma, then took her to the Police Station in order to make a report.

The next morning, Police officers from the Harbour Police Station arrived and took all of them to the Police Station. At the said Police Station, a Police Medical Request Form was issued to the victim and she took her to the Rainbow Centre, Cottage Hospital, Fourah Bay Road, Freetown, where she was examined and treated. The Police Medical Request Form was endorsed which she returned to the Harbour Police Station. The matter was subsequently charged to Court.

This witness was Cross Examined by Defence Counsel. She answered that she had known the Accused for over a long period of time now and that the incident was reported to her.

She confirmed that she asked the Accused several questions to which he responded. The Accused did not tell her that at anytime the victim returned with the mosquito coils, after she had bought them, she did not enter the room. She is aware that the Accused is a barber who leaves home early and returns in the evening. The Accused did not go to his barber shop on Saturdays and Sundays.

She maintained that the incident occurred on 25th April 2017 and that the Accused was not initially at home but he later returned.

She confirmed that the Accused told her that he was tempted and that he sexually penetrated the victim P.W.2.

There were no question for this witness in Re-Examination.

 $\underline{\mathbf{V}}$

P.W.4 is Asma Koroma, who lives at 24A Africanus Road, Kissy, Freetown. She lives with her Grandmother and recognized the Accused through her Uncle, Alhaji, who is a friend of the Accused.

She also knows the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma, who is her youngest sister. All of them including the Accused lived together in the same house. She recalled 23rd April 2017. The Accused sent her to go and buy bread but she requested that her sister, the victim, P.W.2. Salamatu Koroma, accompanied her. The Accused rejected her proposal and so she went alone. When she returned with the bread, she met the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma, in the room of her uncle Alhaji Koroma. The Accused was there as well. He had his trousers on but was shirtless. The victim was holding a rubber of soft drinks but had her clothes on. She handed over the bread to the Accused and left the scene in order to respond to her grandmother's call. Her Aunt, Kadiatu Koroma enquired from her as to the whereabouts of the victim, P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma. She replied that she is in the room of her Uncle Alhaji Koroma, with the Accused present in the said room as well.

Her Aunt went to call the victim whilst she went upstairs. At night, she heard confusion and commotion in the compound.

This witness was Cross examined by Defence Counsel. She answered that she had known the Accused for about 3 (three) months as a barber. Since she had known the Accused, he used to send both the victim and herself on errands.

She further answered that there are other children as well in the compound but didn't know whether the Accused used to send them on errands. At the time she saw the Accused with the victim, in her Uncle's room, it was in the evening but the place wasn't dark. At that time, everybody was outside. When she entered the room, it wasn't locked.

There were no questions for this witness in Re-Examination.

$\underline{\mathbf{VI}}$

P.W.5. is Yusif Hassan Koroma who also lives at 24^A Africanus Road, Kissy, Freetown. He recognized the Accused as a barber and lived together with him in the same house.

He also knows the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma. She is his daughter.

He recalled 23rd April 2017. That day, he returned from the provinces in the evening and went to bed. He was woken up by his wife, Umu Hawa Koroma, and his elder brother's wife, Dora Fillie. He went outside and was given an information concerning the Accused. He then instructed that the Accused be called. They called him through his phone but the Accused did not pick up the calls. They called him through another phone and he picked up the calls. The Accused was told that someone is waiting for him at home and he came. All the males in the compound, including himself, took the Accused aside and enquired from him as to what had transpired between him and the victim, Salamatu Koroma. They put the allegations of sexual assault to him to which he initially denied but later, he admitted to the allegations. The Accused told them that when the victim, P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma met him, he had taken drugs called Tamadol. This witness called one of his friends, an O.S.D. Officer. In the interim, the Accused told them that he was tempted by the victim in order to have sexual intercourse with her. The O.S.D. Officer had told this witness that his deployment is far off and that he will come to the house at 6:00pm the next day and true to his word, he came. When the incident was explained to him, he took all of them to the Harbour Police Station at Cline Town.

The victim's mother, P.W.3, Umu Hawa Koroma, reported the matter and a Police Medical Request Form was issued to her for examination and treatment which was done at the P.C.M.H. Fourah Bay Road, Freetown. The Police Medical Request Form was endorsed which they returned to the Harbour Police Station. At the time of the incident, the victim was 7 (seven) years old. He made statement to the Police.

This witness was Cross Examined by Defence Counsel. He confirmed that the incident was reported to him on the same day when he returned from the Provinces at around 11:00pm when he was woken up from sleep by his wife Umu Hawa Koroma, P.W.3, and his elder brother's wife, Dora Fillie. The Accused was not around by then. No female was present at the time they interrogated the Accused.

This witness further confirmed that the Accused told him that he had taken Tamadol, that the Accused told him that it was the victim, P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma who tempted him and that he admitted to the allegations they put on him.

There were no questions for this witness in Re Examination.

P.W.6. is Dr. Olabisi Claudius Cole, a Medical Doctor who runs a Private Clinic at Edward Street, Freetown. She is one of the Medical Doctors attached at the Rainbow Clinic, P.C.M.H, Fourah Bay Road, Freetown. She gave a detailed outline of her duties at the Rainbow Clinic.

She recalled 25th April 2017. She was on duty at the Rainbow Centre and had cause to examine and treat one Salamatu Koroma, the victim and P.W.2 in this matter.

She reduced her findings in writing which she signed and dated. The same is tendered as "EXC" to which Defence Counsel had no objections to its tendering thereof and the same was read in evidence. The detailed examination results of the victim's vagina was made known to this Hon. Court. The victim was said to have an infection and as a result was treated and given a follow up appointment.

The witness was Cross Examined by Defence Counsel. She answered that there are other ways in which hymen can be ruptured apart from being penetrated as in the case of athletes. The most common means of infection in females is by penetration.

She further answered that there are no DNA tests available in order to prove who the culprit is in sexual offences cases.

There were no questions for this witness in Re-Examination.

VIII

The Prosecution closed its case after tendering in evidence "EXD", the Committed Warrant. There being no objections as to its tendering thereof by the Defence Counsel, the same was read in evidence.

IX

In his case, the Accused opted to testify on oath and did not call witnesses in support of his case.

The Accused testified that before his incarceration, he lived at 24A Africanus Road, Kissy, Freetown and shared a room with one Alhaji. He knew the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma with whom he lived together in the same compound. He recalled 23rd April 2017. He denied the allegations of sexual penetration against the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma as contained in the indictment dated 9th November 2017. He is a barber who usually leaves home at 7:00am in order to carry out his trade and returns at 7:30pm daily. On the day of the alleged incident, he left with his barbing equipments and when he returned in the evening he met Alhaji in his room. He took his bath dressed up and went to Total New Road in order to find something to eat. Whilst drinking tea, his phone rang. He then realized that it was his friend, Alhaji, who had been trying to call him.

At the time however, he was able to respond to the call and Alhaji told him to return home. He went but whilst trying to enter the compound through the gate, he saw the victim, P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma, her mother, P.W.3., Umu Hawa Koroma, her father, P.W.5., Yusif Hassan Koroma and other youth who arrested him. Upon enquiries of what he has done, the people manhandled him and alleged that he had inserted his fingers into P.W.2's vagina, the victim, Salamatu Koroma. He protested his innocence but the people nevertheless proceeded to the Police Station and made a report against him.

Meanwhile, he was detained in a room in the compound. Victim's father, P.W.5., Yusif Hassan Koroma threatened him with a cutlass but he succeeded in puting his hands in the way which caused him to sustain injuries on his left hand. Whilst still detained in the room, three (3) O.S.D. Officers arrived in the compound. The victim's father, P.W.5, Yusif Hassan Koroma, put him on board a vehicle and took him to Harbour Police Station, Cline Town where he was locked up in cells.

The next day, at around 8:00am, he was requested to make statement. The Police interviewed him at the F.S.U. Section and he denied the allegations. He was detained at Habour Police Station for about 23 (twenty-three) days, before he was granted bail. He was subsequently charged to court. He denied

to have sexually penetrated the victim, P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma, with his fingers.

The Accused was Cross Examined by the State Counsel. He confirmed that he lived at 24A Africanus Road, Kissy, Freetown before the incident occurred. It was his close friend, Alhaji Koroma, who took him to the said compound and they shared a room together. The parent of the victim gave their consent in order that he lived in the compound and the relationship between him and the victim's parents was cordial. The victim's parents were not responsible for his upkeep. He had stayed with Alhaji in the compound for less than a year before the incident occurred. On the date of the incident, he denied to have called the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma, and further denied to have even sent her out of the compound. He answered that in fact, at the time the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma, made the allegations against him, he was out of the compound and only returned when he was called on phone.

He further answered that he did not have cordial relationship with the victim and had never sent her to buy mosquito coils for him. He knew Dora Koroma but have never sent her to purchase mosquito coils for him. He denied sending her to purchase mosquito coils for him. He denied sending the said Dora Koroma to purchase bread for him on 23rd April 2017. He denied to have penetrated the victim, P.W.2. Salamatu Koroma, 4 (four) times before the incident complained of; which is 23rd April 2017.

The Accused maintained saying the truth in this Hon. Court. He denied to have confessed to the offence in the presence of the victim's father and other people. He didn't know anything about the allegations levied against him.

There were no questions in Re-Examination by Defence Counsel.

The Accused then closed his case.

At this stage, I must refer to the VCS made by the Accused to the Police on 25th April 2017.

The Accused relied on it and been tendered in evidence by the Prosecution, reliance is placed on it as well. In his VCS made to the Police on 25th April 2017, the Accused denied the allegations.

He told the Police, inter alia, that on the 23rd April 2017, he was together with victims's mother at his place of business together with the other people. One man called Artist, arrived and requested him to do his haircut. He refused as he had waited for a long time now but the said Artist did not show up on time as he choosed to go and watch football match.

He then left his business place and went to take his bath. Thereafter, he dressed up and Alhaji, with whom he stayed together in the same room, gave him food to eat. He further took one mango and gave it to victim's mother who in turn gave it to one pregnant woman in the compound. He was surprised by the action of victim's mother because hitherto when he gave any food to her she used to consume it.

He later went to buy tea and after 2 (two) minutes, he saw missed calls on his phone. Within that period also, he was trying to return home when he received another call from one women who introduced

herself as Bigger's wife, who requested that he returns home. On reaching home, victim's mother confronted him and alleged that he had sexually penetrated the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma, by putting his fingers, into her vagina. He told victim's mother that he will never do such a thing and even when he sent victim to purchase mosquito coils for him, he always ensured that he will receive it from her outside denying her access to his room. He was surprised to hear one Kadi stating that he was with the victim whose dress he removed. He stated that there was a long time grudge between Kadi and himself over the sweeping of the compound. He was interviewed by other people in the compound in respect of the allegations which he denied. In the event, he was manhandled by the victim's relatives. He however exercised some patience as victim's parents had been good to him in terms of feeding and besides, all of them lived together in the same house. He was detained in another room in the house until the next day when he was taken to the Habour Police Station where he made statement having been required by the Police to do so.

In the question and answer session with the Police after the interview, the Accused still denied the allegations made against him.

Counsel for the Accused, having required that she submit written closing address in this case was allowed to do so and which she did. She referred to the allegations made against the Accused, the standard and burden of proof that is to be discharged by the Prosecution and the elements of the offence required to be proved. She outlined the detailed evidence as by the Prosecution witnesses and pointed out the inconsistences contained in the said evidence. She further referred to the Exhibits tendered in this Hon. Court. In her case, Defence Counsel outlined the testimony of the Accused under oath and his VCS made to the Police. She presented from her view point the analysis of facts and law in this case and urged this Hon. Court to find the Accused "NOT GUILTY" of the offence as charged as first and foremost, there were inconsistencies in the testimonies of the Prosecution witnesses and secondly, that the Prosecution had failed to lead evidence to corroborate the testimony of the victim, P.W.2. Salamatu Koroma, as is required by Law, she being 7 (seven) years old, as at the time of her testimony.

The Defence Counsel presented that due to the above, the Prosecution has failed in their case against the Accused as the relevant burden and standard of proof required were not discharged.

Due to suchfailures by the Prosecution, she urged this Hon. Court to return a verdict of "NOT GUILTY" and to accordingly acquit and discharge the Accused of the offence as stated in the indictment dated 9th November 2017.

X

THE LAW

Where the Accused pleads "NOT GUILTY" to an offence as stated in an indictment, the prosecution should prove at the trial every fact or circumstance stated in the indictment which is material and necessary to constitute the offence charged.

The general rule is that, apart from any provision to the contrary, the burden of proof of guilt lies upon the Prosecution, and it is not for the Accused to prove his innocence. See the observations of Sankey L.C. in Woolmington Vs. D.P.P. (1935) A.C.. 481-482, 25 Cr App R. 95; 96

In the instant case, the Accused is charged under Sec 19 of the Sexual Offences Act 2012, Act No. 12 of 2012 which states as follows:

"A person who engages in an act of sexual penetration with a child Commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding fifteen years".

According to the above provision of the Law, it is imperative for the Prosecution to prove first, that an act of sexual penetration was perpetrated by the Accused against the victim, P.W.2. Salamatu Koroma. Secondly, that the victim, P.W.2, Salamatu Koroma was a child as at the time she was sexually penetrated. A child is defined in the Act as a person under the age of 18 (Eighteen) years.

XI

THE ANALYSIS OF THE FACTS AND LAW

Although the Accused denied the allegations, the victim, P.W.2. Salamatu Koroma aged 7 (seven) years testified that the Accused undressed her and sexually penetrated her in his room. Further, that the Accused threatened her with a scissors if she tells anyone about what transpired between them. She also testified that in order to complete his diabolical act, the Accused sent her sister, P.W.4. Dora Koroma, to go and purchase bread for him and that when she returned with the bread, the Accused prevented her from entering the room where she was together with the Accused. Rather, the Accused collected the bread from Dora at the door of the room.

Defence Counsel stoutly argued that the evidence of the victim, P.W.2. Slamatu Koroma, a child of 7 (seven) years, requires corroboration.

Corroboration refers to evidence which implicateS the Accused in a material particular. It is stated that in cases of sexual assaults, the law requires corroboration, which is the evidence of an independent witness to confirm the testimony of the victim. Failure so to do will be fatal to the Prosecution's case.

However the evidence of P.W.3, Umu Hawa Koroma, is worthy to note. She testified inter alia, that she confronted the accused with the allegations that he had sexually penetrated the victim, P.W.2. Salamatu Koroma. The Accused replied that it was the victim, P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma, who tempted him. This is simply an admission. Also, in his presence, the victim was interrogated and she replied that at any time the Accused sent her to purchase mosquito coils for him, he will pull her into the room and sexually penetrate her. She was always reluctant but the Accused threatened to beat her up if she refused. The Accused did not respond to these pieces of evidence although he was not obliged to as it is the prosecution who should prove the guilt of the Accused beyond reasonable doubt.

Furthermore, the evidence of P.W.5, Yusif Hassan Koroma, is also worthy to note. He testified inter alia that when they summoned the Accused home, all the males in the compound including himself took him aside and put the allegations of sexual assault to him in respect of the victim, P.W.2., Salamatu Koroma. He initially denied but later admitted to the said allegations. The Accused further replied that when the victim, P.W.2. Salamatu Koroma met him, he had taken a drug called Tamadol.

Taking all these pieces of evidence into consideration, it is therefore my considered view, that the admission of the Accused in those respective evidences, would negative the Legal requirements of corroboration in offences of sexual assaults.

CONCLUSION

Based on all the foregoing, I am convinced without an iota of doubt that the Prosecution has proved its case against the Accused beyond reasonable doubt. The standard of proof required of the Prosecution has also been discharged.

The Accused is therefore found GUILTY of the offence as charged in the indictment dated 9th November 2017.

After listening to the plea in mitigation made for and on behalf of the Accused by his Counsel and taking same into consideration the Accused is hereby **SENTENCED** to a term of **IMPRISONMENT** of **10(TEN) YEARS**.

The number of years that the Accused has spent in jail to be deducted from the said term of imprisonment of 10 (TEN) YEARS.

HON. MR. JUSTICE JOHN BOSCO ALLIEU J.A.