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Zondo Commission: Duduzane Zuma may cross-examine Mcebisi Jonas

Duduzane Zuma may cross-examine former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas, who has implicated him in his testimony to the commission of inquiry into state capture. The decision by the commission chairperson, Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo was inspired, he said, by Zuma's change of heart from his initial position of not willing to testify by virtue of his current trial on charges relating to the same allegations made against him.

Jonas, who was the first witness to testify in August, placed Zuma in his account of events detailing a late 2010 meeting with Ajay Gupta in which the businessman allegedly offered him the post of finance minister and a R600-million bribe. This, he said, was done with Zuma in the room. Duduzane is the son of former president Jacob Zuma.

According to Jonas, it was Duduzane who drove him from an agreed-upon meeting point – the Hyatt in Rosebank, Johannesburg -- to the Saxonwold home of the Gupta family. Prior to the day of the meeting, Duduzane had phoned and sent him several text messages in an effort to secure a meeting for which the agenda was not made clear.

Jonas further testified that Duduzane appeared nervous when they met at the Hyatt, and said that he would prefer to move to a more private place. A short while after having settled down inside the Gupta home, Ajay joined them. He immediately told Jonas that they had information on him and that the 'old man' had suggested that they talk to him. Jonas told the commission he believed the reference to old man was to Jacob Zuma.

"You must understand that we are in control of everything...", said Gupta at the time. Jonas further testified that Gupta mentioned the Hawks, the National Prosecuting Authority and the National Intelligence Agency as some of the functions the family had control over. "If you work with us, we could make you rich," Gupta continued, and then pointed to Duduzane before continuing, "We made him a billionaire."

Zondo welcomed Duduzane's decision to avail himself: "The commission wishes to commend Mr Duduzane Zuma for making the decision to co-operate and for voluntarily changing his mind.

"As a result of this latest development on the part of Mr Duduzane Zuma, his application now falls into the same category as the other application which I granted leave for last week."

Also challenging Jonas's evidence is Ajay. In his application for leave to cross-examine, he had put conditions to the commission under which this could be done. Ajay and Rajesh Gupta – who is implicated in a separate allegation – submitted that they were not willing to return to South Africa to personally give their evidence. The brothers are currently in Dubai and cited fear of arrest by the Hawks, which they deem incompetent, should they come back.

Their reasons for not wanting to testify on South African soil were ruled out as invalid and unlawful by Zondo, and their application was thus dismissed.

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