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Zuma questions existence of 'state capture', but willing to co-operate with Zondo Commission

Former president Jacob Zuma is not dodging the commission of inquiry into state capture. This is according to a statement he released on Thursday in response to a request by commission chair, Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, earlier in the day for Zuma to submit his version of events against allegations by Vytjie Mentor and Themba Maseko implicating him.

Both of them testified before the commission in August, with Mentor indicating that Zuma was present at the Gupta family home when she was offered a ministerial post by eldest brother and patriarch Ajay. Maseko said he got a call from Zuma, in which the former president asked him to "help out" the Guptas, as Maseko was making his way to a meeting with Ajay.

Zondo extended an invitation to Zuma to address these aspects of evidence put to the inquiry. "There are some areas I would like him to deal with," said Zondo. "For example, the evidence by Ms Mentor that while she was at the Gupta residence, she got agitated and the former president emerged from one of the rooms, they spoke and he walked her to the car.

"Also, the evidence by Mr Maseko that he got a call from the former president on the afternoon on which he was leaving his office to attend a meeting with Mr Ajay Gupta.

"I have invited the lawyers for the former president to indicate my wish that he could put his version in regard to those aspects in an affidavit to assist the commission."

In his statement, released through his lawyers, Zuma says he "made an election in terms of the rules of the commission that he will not apply to cross-examine the witnesses who allegedly implicated him or may implicate him."

It further says that despite him co-operating with the commission, his position is misunderstood as non-co-operation. "We find this very unfortunate since Zuma has sent his legal representatives to every sitting of the commission where the alleged evidence which may implicate him may be given."

Recent media reports quote Zuma as having questioned whether indeed there was reason to believe the state has or had been captured. He was addressing students at the Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape earlier this week.

"A state is composed of three elements: the legislature, executive and judiciary ... that constitutes the state," Zuma told students at the gathering. "Does it mean that these three arms are captured? Is it true?" he asked.

“My view, and I am not disagreeing with anyone, these politically decorated expressions ... there is no state that is captured. Even when people try to describe it, worse when they give evidence, there are some people who were doing things with other people,” said Zuma.

The commission’s hearings continue on Monday.

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