



3 December 2019

Will Zuma and Tlhabi face off at Zondo commission?

Former president Jacob Zuma has until next Monday to respond through a written submission to an application by journalist Redi Tlhabi to cross-examine him at the commission of inquiry into state capture. This is in connection with evidence given by Zuma during his appearance in July that relates to Tlhabi.

Tlhabi applied for permission to cross-examine Zuma after he made what she referred to as defamatory comments. Zuma said in his testimony that Tlhabi was part of an elaborate campaign to discredit him using the guise of journalism. If her application is granted, Tlhabi will be the first person to cross-examine Zuma, who has to date not submitted an affidavit.

Although Zuma honoured an invitation from the commission to appear before it, he did not submit an affidavit to counter any of the claims witnesses made about him. His appearance followed months of snubbing the commission by saying he did not view the witnesses' evidence as implicating him, but was prepared to provide clarity on issues they raised.

It was during an opening presentation that he mentioned Tlhabi, among other high profile individuals, including senior members of the ANC. In the absence of an affidavit providing his version, commission chairperson Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo ordered the former president to submit a written submission that responds to Tlhabi's version of evidence. Should Zuma fail to do this by Monday as directed, Zondo will then make a decision on the way forward.

Zuma was meant to return to the commission for two week-long stretches, the first in October and the second in November. Prior to the scheduled October appearance, however, he stated through his legal team that due to the pressure of his corruption trial in the Pietermaritzburg High Court, he would not be able to make time for the commission. For the November dates Zuma cited illness as his reason for not availing himself.

Other applications granted by Zondo for cross-examination on Tuesday were to Minister of Mineral Resources Gwede Mantashe to question former Bosasa COO Angelo Agrizzi and another employee of the company, Richard le Roux. Mantashe will also be allowed to call a witness as well as give evidence himself. Agrizzi alleged in his January testimony that Mantashe was one of the senior ANC politicians who received favours from Bosasa, at the behest of the company's now deceased CEO, Gavin Watson. He claimed that Mantashe's private homes in Gauteng and Eastern Cape had been protected with state-of-the-art security equipment that included electric fencing and surveillance cameras worth well into the hundreds of thousands of rands.

Le Roux testified to having led a team of people who made the installations at the different properties. Also to cross examine Le Roux is Mbulelo Gingcana, the former procurement manager at the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa.

Journalist Ranjeni Munusamy was also granted leave to cross-examine former crime intelligence (CI) colonel Dhanajaya Naidoo. This is on his allegations during his testimony that she received favours from former CI head Mulangi Mphego, who at one stage instructed Naidoo to take Munusamy's car for service and to have new tyres fitted. The cost for the car repairs, said Naidoo at the time, was around R40 000, and was paid for from a slush fund of the secret service.

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