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### **Zondo Commission – political will could have stopped state capture, says Chikane**

Former director-general (DG) in the Presidency Reverend Frank Chikane is of the view that state capture could have been arrested if the political will to do so had existed when it first reared its head. The failure of state intelligence services to curb it meant that they were weak in capacity or simply did not exist.

“We could have arrested this process, and we didn’t and it cost the country dearly,” he said at the end of his testimony before the commission of inquiry into state capture on Tuesday.

Chikane corroborated the testimony of former government spokesperson Themba Maseko, who had told the commission that he was asked by then president Jacob Zuma in October 2010 to meet with members of the Gupta family. He was on his way to meeting Ajay Gupta at the family’s Saxonwold, Johannesburg home, when Zuma’s call came.

Maseko then asked Chikane for advice on what to do, to which the latter said since there was no criminality involved, he should go ahead and meet with them. To say “No” to the president, explained Chikane, would have amounted to Zuma charging him with countermanding – a military term that means insubordination.

“He came to ask me what to do because the president asked him to see the Guptas and he was worried about the implications.” Once Maseko met with Gupta, and further relayed the contents of that meeting to Chikane, it was clear that there was irregularity, and the concern for Chikane was that it could pose a threat to his job. Maseko told him he had been given an ultimatum by Gupta to act on the instruction of diverting the advertising budget of the government communication and information system to the family’s *New Age* newspaper, which was soon to launch, in December 2010, or lose his job.

“At that point I said well, Mr Maseko, we now have enough evidence...this is the time we should take it on,” said Chikane. “That’s the pain about corrupt activity...it costs clean people dearly.”

Although there is provision in the code of conduct of the public service for directors-general to ask for written requests from their political heads if asked to do something irregular, a lot of DGs lost their jobs when they did this. In the case of Maseko, said Chikane, it was even more concerning, because it was not his political head that was threatening him with losing his job, but an outsider who did not have such authority.

When Maseko was removed soon after repeatedly refusing to co-operate with the Guptas, Chikane saw this as proof that there was wrongdoing. The development clarifies the fear experienced by former DGs who were casualties of corruption, because they tend to not receive support from within government after they are removed.

Commission chairperson Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo noted that for that reason, he would have expected that these DGs would come forward to support the work of the commission. "...I wonder if wherever they are, they don't think that this is something the commission should know about," he said.

But Chikane responded by saying for many, their circumstances after being fired are hard. Some may find themselves being blacklisted even in the private sector, with no one willing to have them sitting on boards, despite the expertise they bring with them.

While in the anti-apartheid struggle days one could always depend on the support of comrades to take care of families left behind, in the corruption culture many are left on their own, said Chikane. "The corrupt do not want you, those opposed to corruption also don't want you."

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