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Zondo commission – Mokonyane denies any relationship with Agrizzi, says he hates women

Former environmental affairs minister Nomvula Mokonyane has told the commission of inquiry into state capture that Angelo Agrizzi is motivated by a hatred for women and black people in general, coupled with a political naïveté in which he played into political divisions of the ANC in accusing her of corruption. Not only has Mokonyane ever discussed her status with Agrizzi in business or social settings, she did not know him well enough for him to have made the allegations that he has against her.

According to Agrizzi's testimony before the commission in January last year, Mokonyane was one of several senior ANC politicians who benefited from cash bribes and other favours from Bosasa in return for their influence in areas of government that Bosasa did business. Agrizzi is the former COO of Bosasa, a facilities management company that was owned by the late Gavin Watson and made over a billion rands through contracts with the Department of Correctional Services alone.

Prior to her testimony being led, Mokonyane read out a submission that she said was aimed at clarifying many of the issues that were placed by Agrizzi on the commission's record. She spoke of the years of scrutiny that her family has faced, as well as the security fears associated with this. It was also because of her political status, said Mokonyane, that her children were often vilified in the media.

"The submissions that have led to me being here today, I find them extremely defamatory. I find them full of contradictions by someone who has had ample time and opportunity afforded to him exclusively," Mokonyane said, adding that Agrizzi must have been naïve enough to be influenced by someone to come after her and attack her character.

Some of the allegations made by Agrizzi that Mokonyane denied are:

- That Bosasa paid for the installation of, and maintenance of security equipment at various homes of her family, from the time she was MEC in the Gauteng government to the time that she was minister (in several portfolios). Mokonyane asserted that her late husband Serge Mokonyane oversaw all security issues at their home.
- That she received cash bribes, at some point R50 000 per month, from Bosasa in return for her influence within the ANC to benefit the businesses of Bosasa that were in business with government.
- That Bosasa paid for the education of Mokonyane's daughter in China.
- That Bosasa paid for Mokonyane's 50th birthday party celebrations.
- That through Mokonyane's influence and facilitation, Bosasa paid for several functions of the ANC in Gauteng, where she is recognised as a powerful member.

"I take serious exception in him saying they paid the burial costs for my son," said Mokonyane. "He has other alternative motives which I do not know of. To claim that Bosasa buried my son is a serious offence."

This was in response to a further claim by Agrizzi that following the death of Mokonyane's son Retlabusa in late 2010, it was Bosasa that carried the costs of the funeral. She asserted that it would go against her character and that of her late husband Serge to have someone other than themselves carry the financial responsibility of giving their son a dignified funeral.

Asked by commission chairperson Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo why in her opinion would Agrizzi gain from tarnishing her image, Mokonyane said it was because he was naïve and desperate, and wanted to play to the narrative that anyone who has supported former president Jacob Zuma is corrupt.

"I find that they seem to be an act of desperation for reasons that are better known of Mr Agrizzi to discredit me, destroy the little of what remains of my character."

As for meetings that Agrizzi alleged were held at her home to solicit her influence on matters in the criminal justice space such as in-depth investigations by the SIU into Bosasa in 2009, Mokonyane denied that these ever happened. She told Zondo that for her to be portrayed as someone who has such influence, not only in the ruling party and the justice system, that she would try and interfere in such matters shows how little Agrizzi knows of how the ANC operates.

Descriptions of features in her home by Agrizzi in his affidavit were the last straw to show that he was working on the behest of someone else, because he got significant details wrong. It is as if he was told by someone else who had been there, how to describe her home, said Mokonyane.

"I have never been in a meeting with Mr Agrizzi and he is also not a personal friend or anybody who I can have a social interaction with him. I would come across him at Bosasa."

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